

*Indian-Eskimo Employment Authority*

located in the general areas of high Indian and Eskimo unemployment and of the Indian and Eskimo people.

Such conference would permit:

(a) the establishment of better lines of communication and co-ordination among all the parties involved;

(b) the exchange and sharing of information concerning successful employment programs involving Indian and Eskimo people and northern employers;

(c) underlining the crisis proportions of the Indian and Eskimo unemployment and under-employment problem.

The Committee also urges the government to exercise more authority in the application of conditions relating to the hiring of northern residents contained in the Northern Minerals Assistance Program.

What was the result of that recommendation, Mr. Speaker? The same thing. Everyone agrees with it when you talk to them about it, but nothing happens and we still have this 50 per cent unemployment rate. The committee report was ignored.

Having ignored the 1969 committee report, the Indian affairs committee of the House made another recommendation in its report dated June 30, 1971. This report refers to the earlier report:

In its report to the House dated May 30, 1969, this committee urged the convocation of regional conferences including representatives of federal and provincial departments directly concerned, organized labour, industries located in the general areas of Indian and Eskimo unemployment, and of representatives of the Indian and Eskimo people, to permit, among other things, the exchange and sharing of information concerning successful employment programs involving Indian and Eskimo people and northern employers. The committee is very disappointed that the government failed to act upon this recommendation and notes as the committee predicted in 1969 that the unemployment problem among Canada's Indian and Eskimo peoples has, if anything, grown worse. Industrial attitudes, although improving, are improving too slowly. Since the government appears unwilling to act to convoke such regional conferences, the committee now suggests that the task of organizing and convening such regional conferences should be handed over to the appropriate regional Indian organizations and that the Government of Canada, through either the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development or the Department of Manpower, provide the necessary funding.

The committee is convinced that much greater use should be made by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in particular, and other government departments as well, of the willingness of provincial, regional, and national Indian organizations, to collaborate with government in evolving vocational programs and employment programs attuned to the needs and skills of our Indian people and to the needs of industries located in the regions where our Indian people live and are available for work.

Vocational programs for Indian youth must not only be integrated with local industrial needs but should include on-job training as a major part of any vocational training course. In addition to the obvious benefits of improved practical training and increased employment opportunities which would flow from such an approach there would also be a useful pressure on vocational school programs to develop the types of training and course needed by industry.

What happened that time? Again nothing. Every time I have talked to the officials of Indian affairs they have said: "Yes, we have all kinds of new programs that are successful". But the rate of unemployment or underemployment still hovers around the 50 per cent level. This very simple, down to earth solution that I propose, though obviously not a total solution but which is at least an attack upon the problem, has yet to be followed. The solution is so obvious, Mr. Speaker, that I am afraid that this may be its weakness.

Somehow, if you want to convince government that it must do something, you must submit a complicated brief

[Mr. Watson.]

written in elaborate sociological terms. Certainly the very simple suggestion I have made which has a great deal of merit—something I have yet to hear anyone deny—is a useful approach to the problem, but it is not acted upon.

● (1610)

I would urge the government and the new minister to give consideration to what should have been done ten years ago. It should have been done in order to make a serious dent in the terrible unemployment problem. Any member of this House who speaks to employers in the north will find, unfortunately, that there is a fairly general reticence in respect of hiring Indians because they have had some unsuccessful experiences. There does not seem to be an understanding that when one hires people who have been accustomed to a traditional form of life, such as the Indians who live off the land, some flexibility is required on the part of industry and not only on the part of the employee so that the employee might fit into the work patterns of the particular industry.

One must be fair in respect of an Indian who wishes to take off a few days to fish or hunt. This must be built into a program. There have been success stories where foremen of companies have been somewhat flexible in giving their Indians employees more leeway that they would give to other employees.

Where rigidity has not existed there has been success and excellent results. The end result with regard to the Indian people, the companies involved, and the country, has been good. I suggest that in the long run we must think in terms of the development of our north with much greater emphasis on employment of the people of the north in the industries that are exploiting whatever is to be exploited, be it the mineral resource, the fishing resource, the tourist resource or the forestry resource.

The other day in the Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development I referred to the Diefenbaker-Otto Lang concept of filling up the open spaces in the north. I suggested that we do not need a lot of people up there, but rather that the people who should be used for the exploitation of the resources of the north should be the Indian and Eskimo people. We are not doing a proper job in absorbing these people into industries. We are not doing what we could to develop these people so that they might be absorbed into industries and be prepared for the types of jobs that are available. This is the other terribly frustrating aspect of the problem.

Despite the report of 1971, which recommended changes in our approach to vocational training and which recommended that the training of Indian and Eskimo people be based on the qualifications required for the type of jobs that will be available to them when they graduate from school, to a large extent the curricula in the north are still based on the curricula of schools in southern Ontario, southern Quebec and other provinces.

The curricula are not based on the job availability situation in the north. These people are not being trained in prospecting and the various other aspects of the mining industry or the forest industry, or in the skills related to tourism or even trapping and hunting. This is the situation in respect of the northern curricula. There are exceptions, but they are not general. One begins to wonder just