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rent proposal, PM non-committal

LAND OWNERSHIP

The Inuit need 250,000 square miles of land for four major reasons, according to the ITC proposal. The land would help the Inuit to retain their "land-based identity." It would aid the people in protecting their hunting, fishing and trapping activities and allow them to control development. Ownership would

enable the Inuit to control the nature and extent of community growth. And, says the ITC proposal, it would involve the Inuit in development activities through greater participation.

Under the terms ITC is proposing, each community would be entitled from 2,500 to 8,500 square miles of land. The amount would be determined by ITC, based on the amount of land effectively used.

Any land claimed by ITC would exclude important mining operations and military bases which are already in existence. But any new development resulting in gross annual revenues of \$100,000 or more would be subject to approval by the Inuit Development Corporation, a group which could make their approval conditional on Inuit social and economic participation, working conditions and environmental factors.

Proposals dealing with Inuit hunting, fishing and trapping rights would have Hunters and Trappers Committees and a Council on Game setting quotas on certain species of animals.

Only Inuit would possess the rights to hunt marine animals, polar bear and musk ox. And the ITC requests that the Inuit be exempt from the terms of Migratory Birds Convention Act, which many hunters are not obeying now.

CORPORATION ADMINISTERS ROYALTIES

An Inuit Development Corporation would be organized to administer royalty funds and set up businesses in the north.

The royalty money, says the ITC proposal, would be used to fund Inuit participation in business and provide funds to support programs to enhance Inuit culture.

"The percentage is reasonable and fair," says the ITC proposal, "and involves no disbursement from the federal treasury.

"The nature of the suggested settlement Proposal tends to involve the Inuit more intimately in the changing Northern society - it does not make them the quasi-welfare recipients of a cash transfer which serve no useful social function, and which tends only to exclude them from their lands and what happens to those lands."

Socio-economic programs which would be established as part of the settlement would include a Fur

Marketing Agency, which would act as a wholesale outlet; programs to assist hunters and trappers, an Inuit Housing Corporation to subsidize new and renovated housing, an Inuit Food and Health Plan, Transportation Project, Education Project and Communications Program.

"We do not regard this proposal as a land claim," Arvaluk said during the presentation to Trudeau. "As we see it, the Inuit are not 'claiming' anything. Rather, we are offering to share our land with the rest of the Canadian population in return for a recognition of rights and a say in the way the land is used and developed."

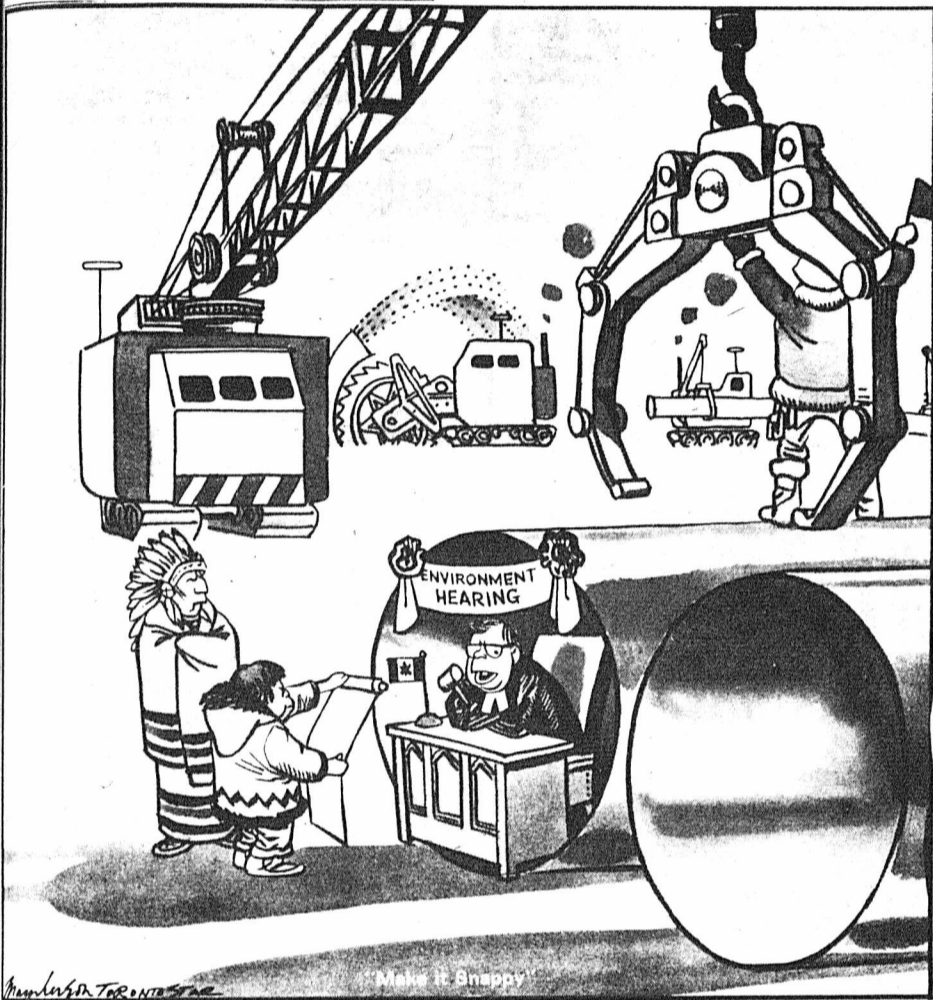
"This is not separatism. We are not calling for the establishment of a sovereign state. We are simply asking you to help us take the first step in the direction of regional self-government ... the kind of self-government that will be responsible to the needs of the Inuit who at present make up the majority of the population.

"We are seldom consulted before decisions are made which affect our future. More often, we are informed after the fact. We complain; we beg to be consulted. Sometimes lip service is paid to consultation, but the work goes on anyway, and in effect our pleas are ignored.

"That's why there is urgency in reaching an agreement with the Inuit. There is pressure on us in virtually every corner of our vast land."

"This proposal would enable my people to become a part of Confederation," commented director of land claims John Amagoalik.

Tagak Curley, former ITC President, who began the process leading up to today's presentation six years ago, said Canada can create a new type of society in the north - one that functions according to the wishes of the majority.



Furlong: "We aren't a hostile people"

by Kim St. Clair

The natives of the northwest are worried. More than that - they're scared. They cling to a lifestyle all but extinct in any other industrialized country in the world, trying to keep centuries of values and modes from flowing down a pipeline. They remain a repressed nation within a nation, a majority entity governed by a handful of absentee landlords.

The amassed power of the multinational corporations is to their right, ambiguous and seemingly indifferent government policies to their left. Overseeing all is a foreboding sense of world panic created by oil shortage forecasts.

What hope do they have of achieving their demands?

Hope lies in public recognition of the situation, say Indian leaders, and the situation, as they see it, is this: northern natives are demanding ownership and control of their ancestral lands, lands that have neither been wrested from them by force nor, they claim, bought from them through legalities. Lands only stolen from them through guile.

The nemesis that is Ottawa is unseen but heavily felt.

This at least, is the native peoples' view of the land claims dispute. Critics of the issue are many and their arguments, justified or not, numerous. Validity of aboriginal rights, legality of treaties signed, and justice of current policies are all under fire. Opponents accuse natives of separatism and greed; natives deny it. Natives accuse Ottawa of fraudulence and injustice; Ottawa denies it.

But all dispute aside, one way or the other there are 17,000 Canadians who claim their homes are being routed and their land ravaged.

Some observers compare the land claims issue with Alberta's struggle to

gain control over its natural resources. Others compare it with the South Africa situation, still others compare it to the frontier land-grab experience of the 1800s.

From the midst of the parliament debates and whooping of bandwagoners emerges a voice, that of author and land claims supporter Hugh McCullum. "I know," he says, "I know this is the last chance the Canadian government will ever have of dealing justly with the native people of Canada."

Another voice cries out - it belongs to Metis Association leader Charlie Furlong - "Without control over our land," he says, "we will end up like our brothers and sisters in the reserves in the south - totally powerless and impoverished."

"The Indians and Metis in the Mackenzie aren't interested in anything like the treaties that have almost destroyed native people elsewhere in Canada," reiterates McCullum. "Treaties catching them in the treadmills of welfare and paternalism from Indian Affairs. Rather, the northern natives want title to their land formalized by parliament. They want to deal directly with the oil and mining companies. And to give them the power to deal in this manner, they want to form their own local and regional government."

These are weighty demands, demands that Ottawa is not, and indeed, can not take lightly. Never before in the history of Canada has a group of natives, when arguing aboriginal rights, declared they wanted to keep the land rather than sell it. As Judge Berger was told by the Indian Brotherhood in the Mackenzie Valley inquiry, "We don't want to be paid off with a modern version of 'beads and blankets' treaties."

"We don't want to trust our land to people who sit in comfortable offices in

Ottawa - people who don't have to depend on the land once the big oil boom is over," states Charlie Furlong.

Opponents to the native movement question the very validity of aboriginal rights, a concept, McCullum explains, "laid out by the royal proclamation of 1763, which says that the indigenous people of any British colony which have not been vanquished (by being conquered in a war) can only be extinguished by the Crown through negotiation with those native people."

But some negotiations were made, argue land claim opponents, citing treaties 8 and 11 from the North West Territories. These treaties, respond natives, are fraudulent. At present this very point is being fought out in the Supreme Court of Canada.

"The Dene people and the Inuit people," McCullum states, "until a few years ago never questioned the fact that the land was theirs. They just assumed that it was, because their parents had always owned the land, and their grandparents. It's only when these huge

reserves of natural gas and oil were found that anybody ever questioned the fact that they owned the land.

What it all boils down to is one grand power struggle. It's the old colonial-administrator scene all over again - or is it? Are not the natives of the north, as Canadians, going to benefit from oil exploration? Are they not treated fairly by a government representative of their needs?

Their response has been clear - no, we are not! Ottawa does not act in the interests of inhabitants of the north, emphasizes the Indian Brotherhood and the Metis Association. What the natives want, claims Furlong, is self-government, just as Alberta wanted self-government in 1905. They want control of their natural resources, just as Alberta fought for control until they received it in 1930.

All they want, he adds, is to have the same right to manage their futures, to determine energy policies directly affecting the northern inhabitants, to manage their land and their futures as Albertans and all Canadians do.

250,000 square miles of Arctic land are being claimed by the Inuit and 450,000 are being claimed by the Dene. A battle over aboriginal land rights is being fought in the Supreme Court of Canada and a multi-million dollar pipeline is being held in limbo.

Are the native people trying to rob Canada of land and some of the most valuable oil deposits within its boundaries? Is a sector of the Canadian populace being robbed of a homeland and a future? Who is being cheated by whom?

On this page is a CUP feature outlining details of the Inuit proposal for land settlements in the north, as well as an article delineating the native stand on the whole issue.

This May Judge Berger will be in Edmonton to hear presentations on native land claims in the Mackenzie Valley, an issue of concerns to all Canadians. Readers are urged to participate in whatsoever capacity they desire.