

Yukon and N.W.T. Government

If the minister and his administration would co-operate in providing the framework for meaningful local government in the Indian and Eskimo communities for a few years, these Indians and Eskimos would have the experience with our kind of government. They would then have the self confidence to nominate in large numbers Indian and Eskimo people for the territorial council, which has not been done up to now, and elect these people. After election, they would play a meaningful role in the government of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Carry on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to allow the hon. member to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Orlikow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will not be too long. We are concerned with the approach of the minister and his department to the demands of the white communities of the north. I am not being critical of these white communities. I understand to a large extent these demands for increased self-government are legitimate. This to a large extent is cultural. Unless we adopt a more aggressive policy than I feel is going to be adopted, there will be cultural genocide to a large extent for the native people of northern Canada.

What are the facts, Mr. Speaker? The nature of white culture allows the white man to prosper in the north. If the government of Canada provided the service I talked about, there would be a good deal of room for expansion of the so-called free enterprise system. The free enterprise system, whether it be the large mining, timber, oil or gas enterprise or the small businesses established to provide for the people who live in the territories, particularly the people who live in the wage economy, is made to order for the white people who go to the north country. I do not say this in a critical sense. It is a statement of fact. That kind of society, to a large extent, is foreign to the Indian and Eskimo people. They are either completely frozen out of that kind of society or have become the hewers of wood and the drawers of water.

The problem is not that the Indian and Eskimo people lack initiative. There is plenty of evidence of their initiative in the north country. An example of this is the way the Eskimo people moved in quickly to handle much of the work on the DEW Line, some of which was pretty skilled and complicated work. This indicates that, if given the opportunity, they fit into our kind of society. However, they have not up until now lived in this way and many of them simply do not understand this way of life.

We believe that the federal government has the prime responsibility for supporting the maximum retention of the cultural traditions of the native people in the Northwest Territories. We recognize that economic development will require many social and cultural changes, but these must not be imposed either by intent or by ignoring the background and tradition of the Indian and Eskimo people in the north country. As I said earlier, there must be a rapid expansion of encouraging local government by educating the Indian and Eskimo peoples to our way of life.

On the economic side of the problem, we suggest if the government really wants to bring about improved conditions for the Indian and Eskimo people of northern Canada, they should give a great deal more consideration to the encouragement of co-operative enterprise. The Indian and Eskimo people of the north have traditionally worked together. They work together in fishing, trapping and catching of seals and whales. The government should develop special programs for encouraging co-operative enterprise by the Indian and Eskimo people of the north.

To a large extent, we agree with the sentiments expressed in the motion moved on behalf of the leader of the official opposition. We have not all had an opportunity of seeing the resolutions passed by the territorial councils. Possibly, to a certain extent, that is our own fault. We may have some reservations about their views, some of which were dispelled by the hon. member for Yukon in his speech. We have great reservations about the ability of the native people of the north. Unless they are given a great deal more support to develop to the point where they can have a meaningful way of life, these problems will still exist in future generations.

The government must do a great deal more than it has done in the past. The minister must have more faith in the people of the north, both white and native, and a great deal less confidence in the idea that civil servants,