

speak and write to our native people, and they cannot understand either one of them. We send them papers which they cannot read. It is a modern Bible story.

The Indian people have been lied to and cheated for the last hundred years, and they have been cheated particularly by the present government since 1968. What is the truth? One native leader put it this way:

The Indian people in the past have been placed within a system that did not create the opportunity to develop self-reliance. Instead, it perpetuated a condition of unilateral dependence that stood in the way of any honourable or mutual exchange between the federal government and the elected representatives of the Indian people. The best interests of any community can only begin to be realized when its peoples originate and execute the policies by which they themselves wish to live.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is that we have never been honest with our native brothers, and this is shown to be particularly true when we review the many commitments we made to them on the issue of housing. The problem has always been an acute one, but it became worse in the fifties when our finer sensitivities were aroused by the native people who out of sheer frustration and out of a legitimate concern for their younger people left the isolated communities to move closer to the more populated areas. As they moved closer to us, Mr. Speaker, the mere sight of them offended our eyes and our finer sensitivities. We started in earnest, though, to address ourselves to the problem of native housing and some of us actually discovered that a real and very special need existed. But it was not until 1970 that anyone talked about a policy for native housing.

There were programs which evolved from the Hudson Bay blanket theory, but real housing policies did not emerge until later, and are not yet working today regardless of what the minister says. His own arithmetic in this House makes nonsense of the commitment he made to our native people to build, within five years, 50,000 homes. He has not built 5,000 homes, Mr. Speaker; he has built something in the order of 3,000—and the program is in its third year. A native housing policy must be more than just a policy to provide shelter. In a statement made to the urban affairs minister by the Native Council of Canada, he said:

We know, and governments at all levels know, that without adequate shelter the native people profit little from massive federal and provincial expenditures in health, education and other development programs. Expenditures in these latter areas run into hundreds of millions of dollars each decade. They achieve slight success because the basic problem of subhuman housing goes unattended.

As in the white society, the home for the native person must be a tool, a component in the evolutionary process of his cultural, spiritual and intellectual life. How does the government respond to this challenge and what has been our reaction? How have the various task forces, study groups and commissions addressed themselves to the challenge to do something for the native people in these areas? First, Mr. Speaker, there was the on-reserve Indian housing program. While the ordinary Canadian finds protection against the pressures of inflation by building and owning a home, this does not, of course, apply to the native. It does not apply because he does not own the property on which his house stands. Ownership in both the house and the property rests in the governor in council, or the minister. So the native's house is not on the

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market. It does not increase in value with inflation. He can never sell it. It fits into the total program that the government maintains on behalf of the native person so that whatever money he puts into the home is lost. Is that the reason the National Indian Brotherhood refuses to go along with any of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation's programs that tie these people, as it has for generations, to making payments on property?

● (1630)

There has never been any native involvement in the planning of native houses, either. Houses are built in Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver and shipped by barge to an environment for which they were not designed. The provisions of the National Housing Act and programs designed for our native people must be altered so that the native people can build log houses and houses with indigenous materials, a matter my hon. friend from the Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth) mentioned. We must encourage our native people to design their own heating system. There is nothing wrong with an Ashley heater. It is not sufficient to send into the north a house with a three-by-three stud built in a factory in Toronto and equipped with three-inch insulation. That might work in Ontario but it does not work in the Arctic. This is why the housing inventory of our native people is in such deplorable shape. The minister says that he is retarding the winter works program because already the new housing program is having its effect. The fact is that at least half the native houses throughout our country are in need of major repair or need to be replaced.

May I say a few words about the native and rural housing program. Now there is a story, Mr. Speaker. We all remember the famous policy that was introduced in the House in March, 1974, which was going to construct 50,000 homes in five years. I asked the minister a year later how the program was getting on, and he answered two questions in the House before he even remembered it. Then when he did answer, out of 50,000 houses there were 24 houses commenced. I suppose you have to start some place, but this was after one year.

Then there was the program that prompted the firing of that great senior civil servant, Mr. Walter Rudnicki. He was fired because he had taken the liberty of sitting down with native people and discussing how housing policies might be advanced to cabinet. He was actually following the minister's instruction to discuss with the native people what should be advanced to cabinet, and he was fired for that. Since then he has taken his case to court, at great expense and at great personal hardship, and the court has found him innocent. His case of wrongful dismissal of a senior civil servant was proven right. He has asked to return to his work in his capacity as a policy planner for native housing, because that is what he is.

**Mr. Smith (Saint-Jean):** Get back to the bill.

**Mr. Oberle:** If the hon. member has something to say, let him stand up.

Although the court found for him, he cannot be reinstated. Over there, Mr. Speaker, sits a man who defends the govern-