

Special Representative for Constitutional Development in the NWT

Former Cabinet Minister Charles M. Drury has been appointed Special Representative for Constitutional Development in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Drury will report to the Prime Minister on wide-ranging consultations to be carried out with leaders of the Territorial Government, northern communities and native groups on measures to extend and improve representative and responsive government in the Territories. Mr. Drury, who has travelled widely in all parts of the North brings to his appointment 13 years as a Minister of the Crown and six years as a member of the Council of the Northwest Territories.

The following excerpts are from the terms of reference for the Special Representative for Constitutional Development in the Northwest Territories, who shall be authorized:

“(i) to conduct a systematic consultation with recognized leaders of the Territorial Government, northern communities and native groups about specific measures for modifying and improving the existing structures, institutions and systems of government in the NWT, with a view to extending representative, responsive and effective government to all parts of the Territories and at the same time accommodating the legitimate interests of all groups in northern society, beginning with those of the Indian, Inuit and Métis;

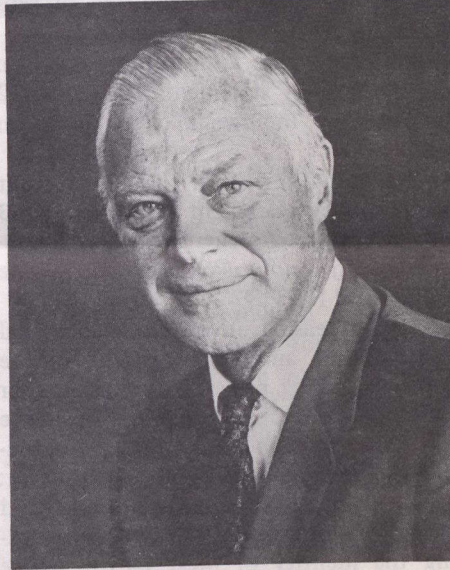
“(ii) to seek consensus among the various groups consulted about specific proposals and measures that could be implemented progressively through legislative amendment of Federal and Territorial laws, as well as through administrative action as required;

“(iii) to co-ordinate these activities with those taking place concurrently on land claims put forward by northern native groups and with any discussions at the official level about administrative adjustments in the relationships and functions of government in the NWT;

“(iv) to keep the Territorial Government and other interested parties fully informed about the progress of the consultations;

“(v) to consult as required with the Ad Hoc Committee of Cabinet on Constitutional Development in the North, through its chairman the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development;

“(vi) to report from time to time to the Prime Minister on all these matters with recommendations for action by the Federal Government.”



Charles M. Drury

In no way restricting the generality of the foregoing, the Special Representative is authorized to include on his agenda for consultation the following specific subjects:

“(i) possible division of the NWT on the basis of functional factors, including economic, socio-cultural, and other relevant factors, but excluding political divisions and political structures based solely on distinctions of race;

“(ii) phased restructuring of political institutions in the NWT to achieve a greater degree of responsible government, including but not limited to consideration of the composition and jurisdiction of the Territorial Council, the composition and role of the Executive Committee, the continuing responsibilities and role of the Commissioner, the future relationship with the Federal Government, and reserved powers of the Minister and Governor-in-Council;

“(iii) transfer and delegation of Federal responsibilities and programs to the Territorial Government;

“(iv) devolution of responsibilities, powers and functions from the Territorial Government to communities, with a community option of creating regional institutions for specific purposes;

“(v) statutory and other safeguards for

protecting native interests, including language, cultural and traditional pursuits;

“(vi) arrangements for promoting native participation in government at various levels, including residence requirements, constituency boundaries, a municipal ward system, representation on subsidiary bodies and in the public service;

“(vii) the political role if any of native institutions for economic development deriving from claims settlements;

“(viii) continuing Federal ownership and management of non-renewable resources, with sharing of resource revenues;

“(ix) decentralization of surface land use and management procedures with institutionalized arrangements for jointly-planned economic development;

“(x) appropriate financial arrangements to support the foregoing.”

Political development in the NWT

According to the statement that accompanied the announcement of Mr. Drury's appointment, in the past few years constitutional issues have assumed increasing importance in the Yukon and NWT, as the Territorial Governments evolved and the various native groups formulated their land claims....

Most of the pressures and tension prevalent in the NWT today derive from three major factors:

- The general demand for a greater degree of self-government whether at Territorial or community level;

- the determination of the native peoples, Indian, Inuit and Métis, to get recognition and power largely through the settlement of their land claims;

- the urgent need for direction and pacing in the development of the economy in all parts of the NWT, long dominated by the vagaries and fluctuations of non-renewable resource operations.

These three factors have been very much in play during the rather lengthy period of proceedings leading to a pipeline decision in the North. They are producing disruptive forces, they interact among themselves and they continue to bear heavily on the whole question of how the NWT will evolve politically in the next decade or so.

The Territorial Government, led by the now fully elected Council, are looking for broader jurisdiction, a greater authority and more effective control of all aspects of northern living. These aims are