

Abe Okpik was the first Eskimo appointed to the territorial council. One of the underlying reasons for his appointment was the desire to show that the Eskimo had a contribution to make. It was also a recognition of their culture, that they are a part of the Northwest Territories and should participate in the whole political process of the Territories.

What happened after that? Not too long afterward Simone Michael was elected. This is the way it should be. A few years ago I was involved in encouraging the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, at that time the Hon. Arthur Laing, to appoint an Indian to the Northwest Territories Council. I suppose I assisted in a way because I was helping the Member of Parliament for the Northwest Territories who was of the same mind.

Mr. Nielsen: He does not have a mind.

Mr. Baldwin: He needs help.

Mr. Marchand (Kamloops-Cariboo): No; he is doing pretty well. So, what happened from that point on? A couple of native people, Métis and Indian, have now been elected to the Northwest Territories Council. This is a great step forward in the participation of the native people in the electoral process and in the government of the Northwest Territories. This is as it should be. During the time I was discussing many things with the natives of the Northwest Territories we also discussed the idea of reservations. It was very interesting to note that a great number of them stated they did not want reservations. They are looking for some other way that would perhaps better fit the times. I do not advocate the establishment of reservations. I really am not suggesting this as a way by which the land part of treaties Nos. 8 and 11 should be settled in the Northwest Territories.

Another significant remark was made by one of the chiefs who has been appointed to the Council. He said that perhaps the longer his people wait for the settlement of this part of the treaty the better off they will be because many of them really do not understand what is going on. He said that perhaps as a great many more of the young people become educated and become leaders in the community the people will be in a better position in 10 or 15 years to understand the situation and make the right kind of settlement or deal for the Indian people so that they will have a better future than the native people have had in the past.

I was very interested when the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) said that the white paper on Indian Affairs was a disastrous start. In many respects this is quite a turnabout because when the white paper policy was announced on June 25, 1969 his party was quite happy to see it introduced. I should like to read a little of what the hon. member for Peace River had to say on that occasion. He said:

Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his courtesy in sending me within reasonable time notice that he would be making a statement, and the copy of the statement which accompanied that notice. I hope this permits me to make a reply, keeping well within the framework of the injunction Your Honour laid down the other day.

Development of Northern Canada

I thank the minister for the statement he has made. There was a reminiscent tone to it. I recall during the last years of administration under the leadership of the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) that a joint committee studied this issue. The wording of the report of that committee dealt with the winds of change which were blowing through the ranks of the Indian people of Canada. Many of the thoughts which the minister expressed in his statement were good thoughts, repeating the thoughts in the report of the committee.

We welcome the statement by the minister. It amounts to an acceptance of many proposals made by the Indian people through the years, and made by those who have worked on their behalf, in this party and elsewhere.

That is an indication of that party's acceptance of the policy on that occasion. I had some apprehensions at that time concerning the policy because, knowing how the Indian community would react, I felt some of the things were quite unrealistic. In retrospect, however, I believe this has probably been one of the best things which has happened to the Indian community. More than ever before the Indian people have been discussing the kind of future they want. This discussion has been carried on in the Yukon Territory, in the Northwest Territories and all over Canada. This is a good thing. Very often in the past policies were handed down and the Indian people had to live with them. I commend the government for taking this kind of approach. It is the right approach because if policies are to be made for the Indian people the Indian people must be involved in making those policies. I hope it will not be too long before there is some positive indication of what direction the policy will take. I hope the federal government, the Indian people, and perhaps the governments of the provinces involved will soon arrive at some consensus because there are a number of things which need to be done by way of legislation.

The present Indian Act is very restrictive. It is outdated and must be amended to fit the needs of the Indian people in modern Canada. The Indian people of Canada many years ago lived, and are still living, in very difficult circumstances. We are all aware of this. However, on the other end of the scale some of them also are very progressive and are quite capable of taking on the responsibility of administration of their own affairs and own communities. Such an opportunity should be provided to those who are capable of taking on responsibilities. It has always been my view that a new act should be based upon the philosophy of progressive options. The legislation should provide that the Indian people may move along as quickly as they wish.

During the recent trip to the New Zealand and Australia I had some very interesting discussions with the Maori people. There is a system there whereby four seats are set aside in Parliament for Maoris, representing the north, the south, the east and the west. This system has been advocated in Canada from time to time but I do not agree with it. I believe it would be a backward step if we were to adopt such a system now. The House of Commons must never be a place in which there is special status for any group of people. Everyone who comes here must be elected on the same basis. But on the other hand, the Maori system has worked very well. The people we talked to have said that the standard of living