

*Supply—Indian Affairs*

That is true, for a letter was sent to an official of the department living in Rouyn to tell him that there were unoccupied buildings in the town of Amos which were large enough to house these offices, and that if these buildings did not meet the needs of the department, a number of Amos businessmen would undertake to build others within a short time.

I continue to quote the minister's letter:

However, I am told that it could more easily be done in Val d'Or.

• (3:20 p.m.)

Therefore, do not think it is easier to put up public buildings in Val d'Or than in Amos. Sometimes, it is building contractors from Amos who erect buildings in Val d'Or.

I continue:

As far as living accommodation for the staff is concerned, Val d'Or, being a larger town, has more facilities; that is one thing which should be taken into consideration, because staff recruitment can be hindered at times because of a lack of accommodation for rent at reasonable prices.

Here is what the tour clerk of Amos wrote to the deputy minister on January 24:

The matter has been referred to the municipal authorities which intend to facilitate access to appropriate housing to employees of your department; at any rate, several large projects are anticipated for the spring. The town of Amos is developing rapidly and will certainly be able to provide accommodation immediately, and even better this summer, for all additional employees your department may need in Amos.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I think that meets the requirements of the Indian affairs branch as far as offices and housing for the staff in that city are concerned.

In his letter to me, the minister said:

The proposed district will include Indian people of different languages and religious faiths. To meet their needs and to provide them with our services in the most acceptable manner, it can be expected that some members of the staff of the proposed district office will also be of different origins and request, for themselves and their families, schools and churches which exist in Val d'Or but not in Amos.

Mr. Chairman, there again, I feel that as far as education and religious services are concerned, the city of Amos can meet the needs of any nationality just as well as any other city in northwestern Quebec. As a matter of fact, in his letter of January 24 which I quoted earlier, the Amos city clerk mentioned this with regard to schools:

The city has several primary and secondary schools and is also the headquarters of the Harricana regional school board which controls the whole secondary educational system in the area. Amos

[Mr. Laprise.]

also has an Institute of Higher Studies, soon to be certified by the provincial government, which prepares students to enter university.

The Indian population of Amos is already integrated in the city of Amos and its religious and cultural institutions, and every day, young Indians can be seen fraternizing with the white population of the city. We submit that the educational experiment of the Indian affairs branch in Amos has been very successful and that the prevailing educational climate in Amos is unique in northwestern Quebec.

Eventually, the city of Amos will be in a position to accommodate all the Indian students from the north of the province and provide English classes for them, since several requests have already been made by English-speaking families who wish to settle in Amos and are only waiting for the establishment of English schools to do so.

Mr. Chairman, now that could meet the requirements mentioned by the department officials to justify transferring the office?

In the light of the reasons given by those officials and the services which are planned at Amos, as well as at Val d'Or and everywhere else, I have come to the conclusion that it is not so much that the Indians want to settle in Amos but rather that civil servants want to ensure their own well-being instead of wanting to serve the Indians who come under the jurisdiction of the department.

Last summer I accompanied the committee on northern affairs and national resources on a tour of northern Canada, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, and I found that in those places too there are civil servants who do not seem to understand why they are there.

Of all places we visited, I noticed that the community where this situation was most obvious was the town of Fort Smith where, it seemed to me, nobody cared about Indians or Indian affairs.

I also noticed that civil servants, in that town especially, were mainly concerned with their own welfare. They are helping Indians to ensure their comfort, but as far as their education or their care is concerned, they almost completely forget about them, to the extent that when we held meetings at Fort Smith, all the Indians and Eskimos who must live in that area, I imagine, were absent, except a half-breed I think.

All that to say, Mr. Chairman, that reforms would probably be needed within the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to ensure proper administration of Indian affairs.

Those are, Mr. Chairman, the comments I wanted to address to the minister this afternoon. I would also ask him once again who requested that transfer of office from Amos to