

Adjournment Debate

tion of the parliament buildings is also in close proximity to all of these.

The final argument is, of course, the cost. It is no secret that relocation of a department the size of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is a costly venture. It means moving approximately 3,000 employees, two thirds of whom occupy offices or cubicles in either the Centennial Tower Building or the Journal Building. It does not take a financial expert to calculate that the amount that will be expended on such a move will be exorbitant. At a time when Indian bands are being daily refused their requests for funding of essential programs at a time when the school construction program is years behind, at a time when Indian housing is at its poorest, the federal government still has enough money to relocate the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development without even considering the needs and desires of Canada's Indians.

There is no argument to support the conclusion that a move to Hull of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development will result in any benefit for Indians. Will the programs improve? Will the policies and programs be more relevant to Indian needs? Will there be greater opportunity for Indian involvement, Indian input, or Indian employment? I think not.

We have heard that the justification for moving the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to Hull as perceived by the federal government is that this move is part of a massive decentralization policy. The Department of Veterans Affairs is going to Prince Edward Island. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is going all the way to Quebec—or should I say just one mile away, across the river to Hull. This is ridiculous—a farce!

How were these key departments chosen? Who decided which ones should move? Whoever was charged with the responsibility should have realized that a department as unique in nature as the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development—a department which serves one key segment of the population—Indians—warranted much more consideration than was afforded it.

If the minister fails to acknowledge this concern, I feel he is acting irresponsibly toward the Indian people—the people his department exists to serve. It shows that this government is saying “to Hull with the Indians”.

Mr. B. Keith Penner (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I reply to the hon. member for Churchill (Mr. Smith). The decision to move the headquarters of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development over to Hull has been taken by the Treasury Board on advice from the Department of Public Works. This decision is part of a plan to achieve a better balance in the distribution of public service employees and facilities in the National Capital Region, more particularly, between the cities of Ottawa and Hull.

[Mr. Smith (Churchill).]

At the moment the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has its headquarters accommodated in eight different buildings in the city of Ottawa. There has been a need to consolidate those offices for some time. The Treasury Board has decided that the department was a logical candidate for the moving of its headquarters into the new facilities that are being built in Hull.

In answer to the hon. member, neither the Indian people nor the department have been consulted about the move, but they have been informed of the decision. The minister has taken up the matter of the moving of the headquarters of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development over to Hull with the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) to ask him to reconsider the decision. This was done as a result of adverse reaction to the move which came principally from the National Indian Brotherhood and Inuit Tapirisat of Canada which are both based in Ottawa. It was done also because of objections voiced by some provincial Indian associations that the minister had occasion to meet during the last four months.

It strikes me that, given the location of both the National Indian Brotherhood and the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, and the need to increase the frequency of face to face encounters between senior officials of their organizations and of the department, Treasury Board would want to reconsider this decision. In addition, because of the number of Indians who are located in Ottawa for purposes of pursuing higher education and seeking employment, and who need periodic assistance and counselling, the department might find it necessary to set up some offices here and employ additional staff if the departmental headquarters moved over to Hull.

The hon. member who raised the question will note that action is being taken. We hope that some reconsideration will be given to this by the President of the Treasury Board.

SEARCH AND RESCUE—REPORT OF TASK FORCE—DATE OF PUBLICATION AND POSSIBLE TABLING

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to bring to the attention of the House during this late show the question of the implementation of search and rescue operations in the province of Newfoundland, a matter which I brought to the attention of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) on November 15. I am pleased to note that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Dionne) will be replying because this really has more to do with that department.

While I have raised this matter on many occasions, I want in the short time allotted to me tonight to point out some fundamentals that are being completely ignored by those responsible in government to implement a surveillance and control capacity that will be required by Canada if we are to achieve the objectives for which we should strive in relation to our declaration to extend our fishing zone to the 200 mile limit.