

live than it is in the north, no special notice is taken of that fact.

In 1971 it was reported that the average family income for Indian people was \$4,418, while the figure was \$10,368 for the general population. In 1965, it was estimated that over 80 per cent of the native population of Canada was living in poverty, and the trend seems not to have changed appreciably over the past ten years or so.

Perhaps I should correct myself in the use of the word "poverty". I think that what we are talking about here, Mr. Speaker, is closer to what the German economist/philosopher E. F. Schumacher called "misery". He said:

Misery is not the same as poverty. Poverty prevails when people have enough to keep body and soul together but little to spare, whereas in misery they cannot keep body and soul together and even the soul suffers deprivation. Poverty may have been the general rule in the past, but misery appears to have become widespread only in modern times.

He went on to say:

Poor peasants and artisans have existed from time immemorial; but miserable and destitute villagers in their thousands and urban pavement dwellers in their hundreds of thousands—not in wartime or as an aftermath of war, but in the midst of peace and as a seemingly permanent feature—that is a monstrous and scandalous thing which is altogether abnormal in the history of mankind.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that you need only look at the statistics for natives with regard to disease, alcoholism, high unemployment, suicide, and mortality rates, to determine where we fit in Mr. Schumacher's description. We may have been poor before, but now we are truly miserable.

So what is to be done? I mentioned earlier that I should like to see a good housing program in my part of the country. The government's own figures indicate that we need at least 500 more units. Once before in this House I described the housing situation in the north as a disaster. I think, Mr. Speaker, that the best step is to give our native people more control over their lives. While not ignoring the good intentions which brought them about, the fact remains that such legislation as the Indian Act is cold, negative and paternalistic. In short, it is stifling. Millions of dollars are spent in various forms of welfare payments but the situation does not seem to really improve. Yet, if a native organization or other body asks for a little money to try to create a different approach that fits the given conditions of a development area, they are accused of wanting to return to the Middle Ages. Here I would refer to the program I mentioned earlier, a trappers' assistance program for people in the north who want to return to living on the land.

We native people are showing new vigour in our desire to grasp opportunities to better our living conditions. The best base for this would seem to be relatively independent groups at the community level pursuing projects that they believe to be the answer, or even the partial answer, to some of their economic problems. These groups are better able to identify problems, and establish projects and priorities which are most urgent at that level.

The brutal truth of the matter appears to be that any supposition that the government agencies can achieve a conceptually coherent and operationally viable program of inte-

### *Indian Economic Development Fund*

grated long-term regional socio-economic development is almost impossible. Past performance will bear this out. The culprit is, quite simply, the whole operational system.

It takes a lot of talent to find an argument that will convince the bureaucrats that a program can be viable. You have to tackle an army of bureaucrats and cut a lot of red tape. In my part of the country it seems we have to cut the red tape lengthwise. That is harder than the traditional way.

Development is acquired by money, diverse work, intelligent long-term sub-regional planning based on confidence, by determination and, above all, by the spirit of a group that knows it has something to contribute and to gain; and is being given a clear, unconstrained open and shut opportunity to prove that.

I know I am repeating myself when I say that a trappers' assistance program and a housing program for the north could work well. I must sound like a broken record, but I have to keep saying this although my words seem to fall on deaf ears.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the government not to think in conventional, paternalistic terms in its attempts to overcome the socio-economic problems faced by the native people. There is a natural inclination to hesitate and worry about taking the wrong course of action. However, some re-thinking is necessary. We must move boldly ahead. As Sir Wilfred Grenfell said:

It is courage the world needs, not infallibility. . . courage is always the surest wisdom.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate on the motion condemning the government's policy with respect to the Indian Economic Development Fund.

First of all I think I should put on the record what that program is. In the publication "Indian Economic Development Fund" issued by the department in 1971, it is stated on page 3: The Fund, designed to assist Canadian Indians in developing and expanding viable business opportunities will provide job opportunities for Indian people, on and off reserves.

One of the main objectives of the Fund is to ensure that Indian businessmen have access to basic financing and the managerial, professional and technical services necessary for the successful operation of their businesses.

The Department sees the Fund as an effective link between Indian businessmen and sections of the Canadian business community whose support is required to help Indian people achieve the greatest benefits through economic development. It is a program which can be mutually beneficial to Indian and non-Indian businessmen.

The purpose of the program, based on a 1969 government white paper, was to fund viable small businesses to a maximum of \$50,000. It was also to be used as a lever for funds from other agencies such as DREE, manpower and so on.

● (1640)

I came to Ottawa in 1972 and have been a member of the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development since then. Each year as the committee dealt with the main estimates of the department we discussed and considered the Indian Economic Development Fund. Each year we read