

Indian Affairs and Northern Development, so much authority and control over every single aspect of their lives. It is what everyone wants, but we somehow cannot achieve it despite the fact that large amounts of money are being spent.

Last year, for example, in fiscal 1985-86, \$56.5 million was set aside by the Parliament of Canada for Indian economic development. This year there is to be an increase to nearly \$63 million. I believe the people of Canada would be interested in knowing that out of that designated \$63 million, \$50 million will be transferred in the form of grants and contributions for economic development, but there is another \$13 million which will be held by the Department for its operating costs in economic development.

Economic development through the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is really a story which fails to deliver much in the way of success. It has a discouraging and depressing record. We begin to wonder whether in fact the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development should be involved in economic development at all.

While not much of value can be found in the reports of the study team or task force on Indians and natives—the so-called Nielsen Task Force—they do make this passing observation. In talking about the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, it is stated, and I quote:

In a department which assumes responsibility for womb-to-tomb care, the pressures to provide social assistance are more irresistible than the economic ones.

For a long while there has been in the minds of the Parliamentarians who sit on the standing committee a suspicion that the Department probably would prefer to have the people under its domination and control in a state of dependency rather than to have them set free through successful workable economic development programs. When the Special Committee on Indian Self-Government travelled across Canada some years ago, it received much testimony which indicated that Indian people want to get out of this dependency cycle, out of this welfare society, but at the same time that every turn they appear to be frustrated in all of their efforts toward economic development.

Perhaps Hon. Members would be interested in just one example which the special committee encountered in the province of Alberta. We learned from testimony that Indian Governments should be allowed to establish their own priorities and guidelines. One of the leaders gave us this example. An Indian band in northeastern Alberta took over the social development program, that is the welfare dollars. They received the dollars and they were going to administer the program. They were told to undertake the program according to the guidelines established by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in consultation with the provincial Government. The Indian people of that reserve, instead of wanting welfare, *per se*, wanted employment. When that particular band council undertook the program, it established its own guidelines based on its own priorities. It made people go to work, for instance. If an individual was entitled to \$100 worth of welfare a month, the band asked that the

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individual be put to work. The council, in its wisdom, put those people to work on community improvement projects. The implications were far reaching. They extended even to the children themselves. When the children saw their parents going to work the attendance rate of those children in school increased dramatically. This went on for quite some time until someone in the hierarchy of the Department told the band that it could not make people work for welfare. What a contradiction in terms!

At the federal level we have job creation programs so that people will not have to ask for social assistance. We have had these programs for a long while and they continue to exist under different names. But when we come to deal with Indian people and transfer social development dollars under their care, we then disallow them from having the job creation programs they want. With respect to the particular Indian band in Alberta, it was told by the Department that it was violating Treasury Board guidelines and to cease and desist. It stopped the program. The contract for the transfer of social development dollars was ripped up, and once again the cheques just came automatically in the mail from Ottawa to the individuals in that particular band. That is an example of how economic development is constantly frustrated at the reserve level.

That is why a number of years ago, before the current administration took power, there was a lot of debate in this country about what we could do to break out of this poverty cycle in which Indian and native people found themselves. It was suggested that a significant amount of money expended over a relatively short period of time—in this case it was five years and the amount was \$345 million—was to be put in a native economic development program. It took a long time for the previous administration to make up its mind. There was delay after delay after delay before it was finally agreed that the program would go forward. There were one or two carefully determined rules about the program. The first was that we should get it out of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. I think I have given some clues as to why we wanted to get it out of the Department entirely. The program went to the Ministry of State for Small Businesses. Then it was thought that it would be a good idea to get it out of Ottawa altogether, because there is sometimes a kind of mentality and approach in the nation's capital which does not fit the regions of the country. So the program was to be administered out of Winnipeg. It was to have a Board of Directors made up of Indian and native people. It was to have a degree of independence which had not been practised in economic development up to that time.

● (1230)

I wish to conclude by telling Hon. Members what happened. Last year Parliament, under the new administration, allocated \$110 million to the program. The Minister of State for Small Businesses (Mr. Bissonnette) expended only \$20 million of that allocation. Out of that \$20 million \$11 million was spent on operating costs, overhead and administration. Only \$9