

Adjournment Debate

easier to accomplish what appears to be the main goal of this arm of his department, administer the hell out of the Indians.

With some regret I will now leave the topic of the ultimate effects of these circulars. I say "regret" because there is much more that could be said about the issue of consulting the Indian people in respect of the implementation of these circulars. Yesterday in the House the minister told us:

... there has been consultation on this matter. We feel that the guidelines responded in many ways to the requests of the native people who said they wanted to know what the rules were under which they have to deal with program funding coming from this department.

I would like to know the minister's definition of the word "consultation". Did it take the form of one of his regional directors walking down the street, meeting an Indian, and saying, "Hi, how's the wife?" By the way there will be some new rules next week". I would also like to know what the minister meant when he said "we". It could not have included the elected representatives of the Indian people. They do not feel that the guidelines respond in many ways to the requests of the native people.

I should like to quote a portion of a telex dated April 16 sent to the minister. It states:

The Prince Albert District Chiefs consider the development of circulars D-1 through D-5 as completely unacceptable.

This was signed by seven chiefs of the Prince Albert District and one other man who was acting as the chief's representative. Were these people consulted? I doubt very much that they were. From the chiefs of the Saskatoon district comes this resolution:

Whereas the circular's intent is to enact policies of the white paper policy of 1969 and therefore a serious approach to revise the Indian Act, to abrogate treaty responsibility and to disregard the constitutional responsibility of the federal government for Indians and Indian lands.

Be it resolved that the circulars will not be implemented in the Saskatoon district, and that the Department of Indian Affairs provide program dollars to the bands according to the needs of the bands.

Again I seriously doubt that the eight chiefs who signed this resolution were consulted.

I have a number of other remarks I would like to make, but at this time I would simply like to ask one question. It is an important question. Will the minister put the program circulars in the garbage where they belong, and give the Indian leaders a chance to propose an accounting system which is acceptable not only to the department but to the Indian people?

Mr. John M. Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Buchanan) has asked me to acknowledge that the reaction from provincial and national Indian leaders to our local government guidelines for Indian bands and Innu settlements has been, to say the least, surprising.

Fears have been expressed that through these guidelines, the minister's department has devised a way to enable it to weaken the authority of Indian chiefs and councillors, amend the Indian Act without consultation, or resurrect the 1969 white paper. These allegations are totally erroneous. Band autonomy and integrity are held to be inviolate by the department. At the same time, however,

[Mr. Firth.]

the department must be satisfied that local band government is carried out on the basis of general acceptable business management principles.

In 1965 the department introduced the contributions to the bands funding program which enabled band councils to operate specific programs. Currently more than 500 of the 567 bands across Canada are administering various programs, and over \$100 million will go directly to band councils this year to administer programs for their members—programs such as housing, education, social services, etc.

Because of the positive response of bands and the expanding nature of the program, a departmental task force was formed in late 1972 to chart the course for the future. Councils, associations, conferences and individuals submitted briefs and position papers. Most, if not all, of the general recommendations of the Indian people were accepted. In other words, the task force report made the objectives clear—all programs that could be managed at the local level should be. The department's obligations, on the other hand, required its involvement to ensure adequate levels of service and the guarantee of appropriate levels of funds.

The task force's recommendations also made clear that there must be general guidelines or regulations for band operations for the benefit of both chiefs and councils and departmental staff. We are therefore now at the stage of introducing guidelines and regulations.

The basic principles of the guidelines underlying local government are what is important. For example, circular D-1 guideline is mostly of a financial nature and provides for the accounting of funds. It also suggests procedures which should be set up by band councils to ensure that band members know when their band councils are taking responsibility for community programs. It makes it very clear that band chiefs and councils are responsible for planning, estimating, and negotiating for the total funds of their community. Circular D-2, for example, permits bands to form district councils for the delivery of programs. Such district councils, however, are only formed as the result of bands agreeing to combine their funds and resources. It is totally voluntary and there is not influence or pressure whatsoever for bands to form district councils.

In summary then I must reiterate that the several allegations made that the guidelines undermine or subjugate the Indian Act, that they take away the authority of the chiefs and councils, that they represent an attempt to revive the 1969 white paper, are totally erroneous. In fact the opposite is true, they provide for local government of Indian and Innu communities by their chiefs and councillors.

TRANSPORT—TRANSFERENCE OF FISHING WHARVES TO
FISHERIES MINISTRY—REASON FISHERMEN CHARGED
WHARFAGE FEES

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, on May 14 I raised the subject of wharfage fees charged to fishermen in my constituency, a subject which has been raised on several occasions earlier in the House and to which no satisfactory answer has been given.