

That the Eskimos have in the past been a declining race may be open to argument, for proof one way or the other is not available, but that they are not now a declining race is shown by these figures.

Two other misconceptions are closely associated with this one. One is that the change in the Eskimo's eating habits from caribou and seal meat to bannocks made out of flour and other "white man's food" has greatly weakened his resistance not only to the scourge of tuberculosis but to other ailments such as measles and the common cold. It's stated that deaths from these diseases, particularly from tuberculosis, have greatly increased. The second misconception is that this change to "white man's food" has resulted mainly from the payment of Family Allowances.

There are several points I should like to make. In the first place, it's by no means clear that tuberculosis and other diseases are on the increase among the Eskimos. The Deputy Minister of National Health and Welfare, recently pointed out that federal health authorities who deal with tuberculosis among the Indians and the Eskimos are not in a position to demonstrate whether the disease is increasing rapidly among the Eskimos or not. While they know what the situation is at the present time, they have no reliable previous figures for comparison. It is known, however, that the death-rate from tuberculosis of Indians and Eskimos together has been cut in half within the last few years as the result of increased health services. It must also be remembered that a more aggressive programme of case-finding among the Eskimos is being carried out today than ever before. This obviously means that a larger number of cases of tuberculosis are being discovered and treated, but it is certainly not evidence that the disease itself is increasing.

It's by no means certain, too, that the resistance of Eskimos to disease has weakened. There have been cases on record, going many years back, of disease wiping out whole settlements of Eskimos. It is quite probably true that epidemics spread more rapidly nowadays than formerly, but that can well be explained by the increasing ease of contact between settlements arising from improved transportation. It should also be remembered, on the credit side, that improved transportation has made it possible to deal far more effectively with the epidemics if and when they occur.

I should now like to say a few words about the effect of Family Allowances and other forms of social benefits on the Eskimo. It isn't true that the trend of the Eskimos away from their natural food to "white man's food" came as a result of Family Allowance payments. The trend is probably not as widespread as is often suggested, but to the extent that it exists it started long before Family Allowances. At certain times it resulted from the Eskimo receiving a large income when prices for white fox and other furs were high, and finding that it was easier to trade part of this income for "white man's food" than to go hunting for his more traditional food. On other occasions the trend has been due to the opposite cause; to a scarcity of game making "white man's food" the only alternative to starvation. By a fortunate coincidence, however, Family Allowances came into being at a time when white fox prices were low and Eskimos were experiencing hard times.