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RE: MID-CANADA REGION

Over the past summer I have travelled across our country from Northern Newfoundland to the Yukon. During these travels I talked with many people in an attempt to ascertain their attitude and views about Canada's North.

Knowing your continued interest in the north, I would like to take this opportunity to pass on to you my conclusions. This is not a formal paper just a series of thoughts and ideas stemming from my wide ranging travels in the past year.

For thousands of years man in the north had adapted himself to nature, and not nature to himself. This changed with the arrival, in the seventeenth century, of people out of Europe. The land was scoured for fur bearing animals that had heretofore been used by family groups of Indians for clothing and meat.

The exchange of furs for European goods, resulted in the complete destruction of the adaptive dependence on the natural environment of the indigenous peoples. Their way of life changed to one of dependence on the whims of alien peoples. The shifting of foreign markets, and the decline in the availability of furs, in large measure the result of over-harvesting, brought the vast fur trade organization to an end. Thus, by the middle of the nineteenth century the northern peoples, now without their basic food resources, and dependant on an alien technology, were left to fend for themselves.

Since the arrival of the Euro-Canadian, development of the boreal forest shield region has been characterized by transient, extractive, commercial ventures. These ventures, based on the requirements of communities unrelated to the north, proceed with little consideration for the people living in the north. As a result, many people who have made their permanent home in the north, have developed over the years a sense of alienation from the south of Canada.

From the period of exploration, resting on the then lucrative fur trade, to the quest for recovery of precious metal resources, to the present denudation of the forests by the pulp and paper industry, all major economic activities have been based on extraction of resources, are transient in nature, and are controlled by outsiders, for outsiders.

We all know of ghost towns resulting from the termination of mining operations in the north. One only needs to fly over the north to see how Euro-Canadians have treated their own people, and the resources of the region. The dependency on forces outside the region continues. Under present utilization of our forests, I believe it is likely, albeit for sound economic reasons, that the pulp and paper industries may well move their operations south to areas of fast growing southern pine, once existing facilities have fulfilled their economic usefulness. And once again, we will witness the indifference of the rest of Canada to the well being of their compatriots, who choose to occupy the central heartland and hold it as Canadian territory.

This repetitive alienation of people living in the north is aggravated by factors other than economic. The growing multiplicity of regulations, usually designed for southern areas with high population density, is felt as an unwarranted, repressive and authoritarian intrusion into individual freedom of expression and action. The power of government offices to search "wherever their suspicions may chance to fall" is totally subversive of democracy. The burden of this action is expressed in the obvious indifference and lack of initiative manifested in many northern communities relative to other communities in Canada, for the people feel they have only colonial status. There is an obvious need for some form of regional government, answerable to the people in the north. Certainly, a new approach is required, for the land is not the private preserve of those from outside who may, from time to time, wish to harvest its resources.

People living in the south of our country perpetuate a myth that Canada no longer has a frontier situation. This is completely erroneous. There are hundreds of square miles of territory surrounding the great inland waters of Hudson's and James Bay with less than one person per square mile. This kind of isolation, this indifference in experience and background, results in a people with entirely different outlooks on life. If Canada is to grow and prosper, the resources of the north must be developed, but I suggest it should be with the people of the north, not separate from them.

I should record that there appears to be no problem of national identity in the north. From coast to coast, everyone I talked with, whether they were old settlers, indigenous peoples, or recent immigrants,

was first and foremost a Canadian, even where their very survival depended on foreign capital investment. There are, of course, regional variations, but in all regions our people view themselves clearly apart from the Americans. This, I believe, stands in marked contrast to many of our southern city populations.

Another aspect of the problem of identification for the people of the north is communication. There are regions which by virtue of radio are informed as to what is happening, in their neighbouring communities, in their Provincial or Territorial Capitol, in Ottawa, and in the world. These people do not feel cut off and isolated. But there are other areas, such as northern Ontario, where such is not the case. People in the Lakehead have virtually no idea of what is going on in Sault Ste. Marie, their nearest neighbouring city, for there is no radio link. Commercial broadcasting, in the area, looks inward rather than outward. This does not aid in identification of Northern people with the rest of Canada, but reinforces the felt isolation. The same may be said for the prevailing newspaper media in the Lakehead. Furthermore, agencies such as the C.B.C. have completely abrogated their responsibility in Northern Ontario, for they have not even bothered to set up a station in the area.

The situation is perpetuated by the existing power structure at the local level, with its 'old guard' family control, which, while it no doubt gives stability to the community, often performs like the Family Compact of old Upper Canada. The ultimate social actions which result from this kind of control are well-known. Another factor in this

process of alienation of the people of the north, is the prevailing absentee ownership of the extractive based industries; Management is transient, and transient management, regardless of how conscientious it might be, in terms of community involvement, is still - transient.

With reference to the work force significant elements of this force are mobile, others are seasonal workers, while others are subject to dislocation in the face of the application of new technologies. Thus many do not make a lasting contribution to the long term development of northern communities. For the same reasons many young people leave the region, thus the north is losing its best resource - its young people. Those who do stay, frequently become a public charge as they age, for there are no alternative avenues of employment open to them, in a land with virtually no light secondary industry. Lack of opportunity has resulted in a poverty problem in many areas of the north, yet if it is to be developed competent people are needed and a program to induce young Canadians to come north and open up the frontier is required.

The many indigenous people of the region have reaped the grievous suffering of a subjected people, under the dichotomy which prevails between the needs of people, and the goals of our economic system. Their expanding population largely the result of the introduction of limited health services, based on pre-natal and post-natal care combined with the introduction of game conservation measures, which limited food and cash resources, has resulted in a forced dependency on an alien overseer. This, combined with the introduction

of a formal education program, has caused a severe and drastic dislocation in the way of life of these peoples. A change in the direction of conformity to an alien culture. The only justification for such action must rest in the 'right of conquest', a stand no longer palatable in today's world.

The dominant society must recognize that it is engaged in an unco-ordinated program of forced acculturation. Only then might they be in a position to face up to the effects of their actions. In the meantime, for those many young people, who, as a direct result of actions taken to date, are no longer able to fit into their own society, yet do not have a place in the communal life of the dominant society, an answer must be found. One which will at least permit those who want to participate, an opportunity to do so.

I would suggest that the people of Canada have within their power the means for providing a role for many of these young people. The numerous government departments that maintain sizable operations in the areas inhabited by Indian people could employ many of them. Whatever the cost in dislocation because of labour turn-over or expense incurred in on-the-job training, consideration should be given to such an approach. It is believed that if such a scheme were implemented, there would be, over the years, a gradual shifting to employment in the private sector of the economy.

Returning to consideration of the development of the north as a region, it must be recognized that any development program has far reaching effects. What factors, for example, have been considered in respect to the on-going survey of water resources of the Albany River?

One cannot help but wonder if any consideration has been given to the resulting dislocation of the indigenous people, not to mention the utter destruction of plants and animals, and the concomitant disruption of the ecological balance. A minimum requirement would seem to be a complete summary of the resources of the area, before deciding on a program of inundation and diversion of the waters. Once again, it appears, the land will be exploited by outsiders, for the benefit of outsiders.

In terms of research, any program set up to investigate the north should be centred in northern institutions, not in the south as often is the case today. For example, research with respect to an afforestation and reclamation of our soggy wastelands around Hundson's Bay could be undertaken by the universities now situated in the north. One only needs to look at the vast range of chemicals which the USSR is recovering from their peat bogs, to recognize the unrealized potential of the area. Conservation and pollution research must also be the subject of continuing study if we are to leave the land livable for future generations.

Let us look at some possibilities for development of the north. There are areas now forested which are suitable for cattle grazing. Such a land utilization would not only provide a local food supply, supplanting the present situation which sees almost all basic food supplies imported, it would also provide a working situation for many people in a context with which they could identify. Further, a programme of co-operative ventures, to produce and market products would be

highly desirable. Such enterprises would belong to the people, and they would identify with the operations. This is very important, since a sense of identity cannot now be achieved with ownership and control resting, as it does, some place far removed from the north.

Looking north to the Bay much of the land appears uninhabitable. But it could be put to use for grazing caribou, under the management of the native people, who live in large tracts of that area. This is the natural habitat of the caribou, an animal which can digest many plants not suitable to man, and convert them to edible meat. The caribou is a herd animal, and could be domesticated without major difficulty.

The development of plant products in the north, by the people living there, is worthy of consideration. This would include the cultivation and harvesting of such products as blueberries, cranberries, mushrooms, wild rice, and mosses. With some encouragement and assistance, such enterprises might be undertaken by many of the Indians living in the region.

Much of the land surface of the north is comprised of beautifully coloured shield rock. Noting the strength, durability and range of colours of this rock, one considers the possibility of crushing it for utilization as surface coating for curtain walling. Certainly there is a large and growing market for such building materials in the magolithic buildings of the southern metropoli.

The development of the off-shore mineral finds, now under exploration in Hudson's Bay, could be undertaken by going overland, through Ontario, rather than by water, as is now the case. The wealth apparently lies there, would certainly justify the building of an

overland route by the public sector which would open up corridors to the Bay. The result would be of inestimable benefit to the people of the north, and to the country as a whole.

In today's world, industry has a social responsibility. It is no longer acceptable to establish an extractive industry with a short life span. Once an industry goes into an area, regardless of the type, it attracts many other secondary service enterprises. This means people, families, communities. Corporations in today's world have a responsibility for the communities they create.

I have tried to state some of the problems that prevail in the central shield region of Canada, and to offer some suggestions as to future direction of growth and development in the region. The aspect of 'people' has been emphasized, because it is fundamental.

Under our present system of blended private and public sector financing of development, the people of Canada have a direct responsibility for ensuring the development of their mid northern territories but they must make a choice between haphazard and unplanned development and planned programmed development soundly based on both the human and natural resources of the country.
