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**REFERENCE FOR ADVICE
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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

REFERENCE FOR ADVICE NO. 7
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BROADENING OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
FOR SEMI-SKILLED AND UNSKILLED WORKERS
RESIDENT IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

The Commissioner requests the advice of the Council on Broadening of Employment Opportunities for Semi-Skilled and Unskilled Workers resident in the Northwest Territories.

Broadening of Employment Opportunities
for Semi-Skilled and Unskilled Workers
Resident in the Northwest Territories

The Problems

- 1) There is very little employment available in the Northwest Territories or in Canada generally for persons without a skill to sell. The limited unskilled employment that is available in the north is generally seasonal and does not normally produce a sufficient income to last a family for a year. Even if all of these unemployed persons were provided with salable skills, there would still be insufficient ready employment in the Northwest Territories at this time to provide opportunities for them. The skills learned might, however, find a ready market in southern Canada.
- 2) Without a skill to sell people can seldom find employment. This is particularly true in northern Canada. Without employment from which the unemployed can get training, they can seldom achieve a salable skill, unless, by attending a vocational course they have been trained for a specific partially skilled occupation. Generally speaking, a school or institution can only provide the initial basis of a skill upon which further skill must be obtained by practical experience. During the gaining of practical experience, however, the school can add further knowledge.
- 3) When very limited economic opportunities exist, victims of the situation often must be supported on relief or social assistance. Many of these persons have a chronically low standard of living which has been described as a "sub-culture of poverty" - a way of life with standards of its own that are significantly different from those which the rest of society holds. These standards, passed on to each succeeding generation as long as poverty continues, can pose substantial obstacles to economic and social development. Perhaps most important among these obstacles are discouragement, hopelessness and frustration. These in turn breed an unwillingness to try to extricate oneself from ones lot. This in turn engenders a willingness to set the horizons for personal advancement lower than is realistic. The result is complete lack of ambition.
- 4) The general background and attitude of unemployed northern people, both educationally and socially, is not normally conducive to their being able to hold on to permanent employment, even if it is offered.

Some Possible Solutions

- 1) a) A complete labour survey of the Northwest Territories to build up a statistical picture of the employment situation by occupations, numbers and localities together with a realistic projection of possible employment for the next ten years based on what is presently known.
- b) Ensure that all possible job opportunities available in the Northwest Territories are offered to territorial residents. At the present time, long-term residents of the Territories are remaining unemployed while many jobs are being filled by seasonal or transient labour from southern Canada. Particularly good examples of this are in the commercial fishing industry on Great Slave Lake and in the construction industry. There is a fair potential of employment for physically fit residents of the Territories for jobs of this type if the residents are properly trained and physically and mentally prepared to fill them.

- 2) Establish an occupational training program applicable to men and women based upon the occupations found in the labour survey. The courses chosen in this program should concentrate on those subjects, both academic and occupational, that are required for persons to achieve a salable skill. By concentrating on these academic subjects required for a person to learn an occupation and only to the level that is required to learn that occupation, a person with a relatively low grade of academic background could be accepted for training. Those taking part in such programs would receive vocational allowances rather than social assistance. After job placement, the unemployed would probably require up-grading and continued training. During training such a person would also receive a vocational allowance. Once a skill has been learned, it is salable anywhere in Canada. A mobility is thus established allowing a person to move to a job if work is not available in his own locality.
- 3a Expand Vocational Education field staffs to provide for greater expansion of existing facilities and vocational offerings. With encouragement, and receipt of vocational allowances, a number of unemployed residents may be prepared to take academic up-grading courses without which many occupations, particularly the better paid, are denied them. Apprenticeship, special courses and exploratory courses are available now, but are limited due to the small vocational education staff.
- 3b Expand programs that train residents for occupations and to standards applicable both to the Northwest Territories and southern Canada. This enables a resident to take work in a province if work in his occupation is not available in the north, thus establishing his mobility.
- 4) Establish a public works type work program based on the natural resources and the needs of particular areas of the Territories. These could be based on two major items, road building and house building, but could be expanded into other building projects such as boat building. By establishing portable mills in those areas where timber is available, most settlements in these areas could be brought up to a good housing standard. These houses could be either log, prefabricated or built from individual items produced on the site. The supervisors for the mills and any such jobs as electrical, plumbing and heating and carpentry could be hired under contract and would not only supervise the projects but would instruct. This would mean that not only would there be a great improvement in the standard of housing but skills would be achieved which would be salable in the open market. Residents taking part would receive normal vocational allowances. Similar arrangements could be made for road building projects.
- 5) Establish a pilot community development project in one community and concentrate all our efforts upon it. This would have to be carefully planned and would encompass social and economic research both fundamental and applied, adult education, vocational education, and economic development projects. The advantage of a pilot project in a selected community and the direction of a substantial portion of our staff and financial resources in that one community is that we can literally hold a community under a magnifying glass. This would determine where mistakes were being made, follow-up these mistakes and individual failures, and provide sufficient continuing support for economic development projects. It would also allow for participation by residents of the community so that it should be possible largely to eliminate operational problems which may be created by our own administrative and supply system. In short, in a pilot project such as this we should be able to pinpoint the problems in two or three years and develop techniques and approaches which might require ten years or more by our present system of spreading our efforts thinly over a broad area.

- 6) Establish a system of programs of social education in order to develop the social know-how, social mobility and social flexibility that successful exploitation of economic opportunities demand. This would apply particularly to those persons wanting to go into regular wage employment. For those planning on wage employment, emphasis must be placed on the responsibilities they will incur.
- 7) Pass labour legislation which would include
 - a) a principle of local preference in hiring;
 - b) a Minimum Wage Ordinance to ensure that all persons employed would receive a fair wage for work performed.
- 8) Make every effort to expand present industries and establish new businesses and industries. This would be a major and complete program in itself involving:
 - a) Area economic surveys to identify opportunities for industrial and commercial growth,
 - b) research on products which could be economically produced in the Northwest Territories including new techniques, materials, machinery, etc.,
 - c) research the needs of residents and establish which of them the Territories can produce,
 - d) feasibility studies to determine if a new industry or service could really be operated on an economic basis,
 - e) financial assistance, possibly including some type of industrial development fund specifically planned to meet the needs of the Territories,
 - f) advisory services to businessmen and
 - g) advisory services on marketing and assistance in planning distribution and promotion of products.

Most of these are provided in southern Canada by provincial government agencies.

NOTE 1:

Special consideration should be given to those industries which would provide employment of a type and character which would closely parallel the experience of large numbers of unemployed persons in the Northwest Territories.

NOTE 2:

Attached is Appendix A which illustrates current United States programs to meet similar problems.

The Commissioner requests the advice of Council on these matters.

The United States "War on Poverty"

In many areas of the United States, problems similar to our own have arisen. This is particularly true in those areas where there are concentrations of Negroes and Puerto Ricans, or where the termination of a one industry economy such as coal mining, has left large numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled workers unemployed. Indian reservations also add their quota of persons in need of assistance.

In an effort to overcome these problems, President Johnson has authorized a massive assault which he has called a "War on Poverty".

WHAT THE PROGRAM IS

The program breaks down into six parts, some to be administered by the new Office of Economic Opportunity, some by other Government departments - such as Labour, Health, Education and Welfare:

1. Youth programs will absorb \$412.5 million. This will be divided among three projects: first, a Job Corps, similar to the Civilian Conservation Corps camps of the depression years, where 40,000 young men and women will work in conservation or work-training camps and be paid the while. Second, a work-training program under which OEO would pay State or local governments the cost of giving full or part time jobs to unemployed youths. Third, a work-study grant which would be similar to the GI Bill of Rights of the post-war years when veterans were given all or part of the cost of their education and maintenance.
2. Community Action programs form the heart of the Bill and get \$315 million. The Federal Government will pay up to 90 per cent of the cost of concentrated local programs to combat poverty on a community wide basis. In effect this means an extension of the Mobilization for Youth projects which have been established under the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency to find jobs, give training, improve housing, reduce illiteracy and so forth.
3. Special rural programs will make \$50 million available for grants of up to \$1,500 to rural families and up to \$2,500 in loans for farm or industrial investment likely to increase family incomes on a long range basis.
4. \$25 million will be given to extend the current Small Business Administration grants and loans.
5. Work experience programs will set aside \$150 million for work-training of unemployed fathers or other members of needy families. This will be an expansion of a program already in force in 18 States called Aid to Families with Dependent Children (.AFDC)
6. Volunteers will be allotted \$10 million for work in various Federal programs such as mental health, migrant, Indian reservations, and the Job Corps.

HOW IT WILL WORK

Youth Jobs Centres to help young people find jobs on the open labour market and an Urban Youth Service Corps with three stages of employment provided for youths will be established. These three stages will be a short period of made-work, a longer period of working on jobs established for the purpose of learning simple skills, and a period of on-the-job-training in private

employment with salaries going from about 75 cents an hour up to normal apprenticeship rates - around \$1.25 an hour.

Educational aids will be instituted: remedial reading, home visits by teachers, curriculum planning to suit low-income students, and homework helpers to take the place of parents handicapped by their own lack of education.

The traditional social services are being expanded imaginatively. Neighbourhood service centres, for instance, give help to released offenders and the like. Women volunteers visit homes to show those who can't cope with low-income household problems how to manage.

Fourteen types of community action have been suggested for Federal aid:

- efforts to find new jobs;
- strengthening of basic education: reading, writing, maths;
- school guidance and social work in schools;
- after school study centres for tutoring or academic work for adults and children;
- pre-school programs;
- literacy courses;
- special education for migrants and transients;
- improvement of living conditions for the aged;
- health education and examinations;
- rehabilitation and training for the handicapped;
- child-care or youth centres;
- improving housing and home management;
- helping rural families to adapt to urban life;
- recreation and physical fitness.

The Job Corps will depend on community support. While these will be based on the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 30's, which took out-of-work men and set them to work on forestry, road building and the like, they will be completely non-military in atmosphere, and voluntary. The problem is, of course, quite different from that of the depression years. Instead of the middle class youths for whom society had failed to find work, the occupants of the 100-200 man camps will be low in skills and ambition, often branded as failures. The land used will be Federal, but the local agencies will have to co-operate in finding the campers to fill them, and in getting them jobs when they've finished. The staffs are planned to include one counsellor to 15 campers. There will be Peace Corps type volunteers, and, in time, leaders chosen from campers themselves. Plans are to use Federal conservation employees as part of the staff, and to institute program instruction using new reading material to encourage full grown youths to learn reading and writing. It is estimated that it will take three months to two years to bring the campers from subsistence level education to a level acceptable for instance by the army.

Aid to Families with Dependent Children reflects the dislike of large welfare handouts. Instead of increasing payments or food allowances to these families, it offers training with good pay deducted from the welfare cheque for the family member who is being trained. Although buried in the back pages of the Bill, this part could become as important as the community action idea. More graduate social workers are being added to staffs to see if assigning low case loads of employable clients to a few highly qualified social workers will help reduce relief rolls.

Pilot projects have been started in which one square mile of particularly bad districts are being given a concentrated going over by four skilled caseworkers.