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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

SESSIONAL PAPER NO. 11
(Second Session, 1965)

REVIEW OF TRAPPERS' ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

DISPOSITION

Accepted as Read.....
Amended..... See Text.
Rejected..... **JUN 21 1965** See Text.
Deferred..... See Text.
Not considered.

REVIEW OF TRAPPERS' ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

At the last Session, Council requested that a study be made of the possibility of combining the existing Trappers' Assistance Programs administered by the Indian Affairs Branch, the Dept. of Northern Affairs and the Territorial Government. This paper is a review of those programs and discusses some of the factors involved in amalgamating them.

The principle of subsidizing or otherwise assisting those who harvest natural resources has been accepted by governments and has wide application, particularly in agriculture. The Trappers' Assistance Program is a logical application of the principle.

Territorial Government Trappers' Assistance Program

As outlined in Sessional Paper No. 4 of the First Session, 1965, the purpose of the program is to assist trappers to reach remote, unharvested or underharvested areas. Only non-Indians and non-Eskimos are eligible for assistance. At present loans to a maximum of \$700 for equipment, supplies and aircraft charter may be granted to applicants. Repayment of a loan is expected but is forgiven if the trapper can prove he did not obtain sufficient fur. Sixty-nine per cent of the loans granted during 1963-64, totalling \$5,144.89, were repaid.

The program is administered from Fort Smith by the Superintendent of Game. Local Game Management Officers receive applications from trappers, provide advice and recommendations and forward the applications to Fort Smith for approval.

Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources Program

This is essentially a welfare program for Eskimos, administered by the Welfare Section of the Office of the Administrator of the Arctic and locally through Area Administrators. Trapper Assistance forms part of the Social Assistance Program of the Welfare Section.

Loans are given in the form of authorization to obtain food supplies, traps, ammunition and other equipment from local stores. Repayment is expected but if a trapper cannot repay the unpaid portion is charged to the Social Assistance Program. An additional form of assistance is provided by loaning government owned traps. Trappers must pay for traps lost through carelessness.

No estimates are available on the average amount loaned per trapper nor is information available on repayment rate except that the rate at Frobisher Bay is low. It must be remembered that this is primarily social assistance, usually given only to those who are in poor financial circumstances.

Indian Affairs Branch Program

This program is administered by the Economic Development Division for Indians in the Northwest Territories and in the provinces. The objective is to improve the trapper's income by better use of fur and other wildlife resources. The program is administered locally by Agency Superintendents but in some cases Trappers Councils decide the amount and distribution of

assistance requested.

Assistance may take several forms, such as provision of grubstakes, marketing of furs, purchase of trapline equities and improvement of existing trapline facilities. The Branch also operates major muskrat projects and is considering other assistance such as the use of mechanical transport in lieu of dogs and developing a cheaper dog food program. Advances for air craft charters are not provided. It is believed that the trappers cannot afford charters.

Grubstakes varying in value from \$100 to \$750 generally are provided where grubstakes from traders are inadequate or not available. They are given on a basis of fur harvest potential and on the trapper's ability to bring in fur. Cash is not given but authorization to purchase food is, on a repayable basis. If fur species "crash", disappear from a trapper's area, he is not expected to repay the cost of the grubstake.

An application for a grubstake is reviewed critically. An inventory is made of the trapper's assets - traps, camp gear, etc. - and points allotted for each category. A trapper must have 60 points to obtain a grubstake. If he does not get 60 points, he may be given the necessary equipment (traps, canoe, rifle, ammunition) to meet the minimum requirements, the cost to be repayable over a two to three-year period. As mentioned above the trapper's estimated ability to catch fur is also an important factor in the decision about his application.

Discussion

Two economic problems face the fur industry, low fur prices and the rising cost of goods and services. There are social problems as well. Increasing education and health services, and better housing programs militate against trapping as a way of life, reducing incomes and resulting in an under-harvest of furs in some areas.

There are two basic objectives in a good program. One is to produce more income for trappers and their families and the other is to make more efficient use of fur resources. The achievement of those objectives requires sound fur management programs based on adequate knowledge of the fur harvest potential and of the best methods of harvesting. It also requires strict judging of applications from trappers for assistance so that the program does not become solely a welfare measure. Repayment is essential.

From the above program descriptions, it can be seen that some differences exist in their objectives, administration and in the assistance provided. Amalgamation of the programs would require full prior discussions and agreement on the following points:

1. Policy of the Indian Affairs Branch is to discuss fully with the Indians, to seek their comments and approval on any proposed changes in Indian benefits. Incorporation of the Indian Affairs program into a common program could not be achieved until agreement of the Indians concerned had been obtained.
2. Reconciliation of the objectives of all three programs.

3. Equalization of the assistance offered under each of the programs.
4. Agreement on the level at which actual administration would be exercised - Area or District Headquarters.

Preliminary discussions only have been held to date but it is planned to examine further the feasibility of combining the three programs. A final report will be presented at the next Session of Council.