

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
5<sup>TH</sup> COUNCIL, 30<sup>TH</sup> SESSION**

**TABLED DOCUMENT NO. 1-30**

**TABLED ON JUNE 23, 1965**



## NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

TABLED DOCUMENT NO. 1

I table the attached brief regarding the social system of the Northwest Territories, especially Inuvik, which was submitted to me by P.S. Barry, a citizen of Inuvik. This brief is addressed to the Council of the Northwest Territories and to the Government of Canada.

B. G. Sivertz,  
Commissioner

Mr. B. Sivertz  
Commissioner, Northwest Territories  
Fort Smith, N.W.T.

Inuvik, N.W.T.  
May 15, 1965

Dear Sir:

This brief barely touches on political and economic affairs. I must leave these subjects to somebody else -- hoping that somebody exists.

In the department of politics, NWT is in sad shape being a colonial holding of federal government agencies and the vested interests they choose to favor. It is also an entertaining laboratory of social experiment for their consultants. Perhaps the federal government is reluctant to loosen its dictatorship of NWT because the status quo is so profitable and so much fun for so many Outsiders.

We are served the crumbs of democracy here. This is the time when the NWT Council should be packed with native representatives of the people -- at the very least, two Councillors per settlement and town -- and they should be permitted real power to control the destiny of their own land. Right now they should be drawing up a bill of social and private rights that would be an example to all. These are the things colonial people all over the world are struggling for. Why should they be withheld from Canadians?

The excuse we're given for our political bondage is that we can't yet afford truly representative government: the expense would be too high; distances are too great. Strangely, we can afford the large entourages of absentee chiefs on tour, we can afford the repetitious "surveys" that gather dust; we can afford to move whole households of people in and out of the country on a rotation-vacation basis; we can afford to fly badminton players hither and thither for tournaments.

The NWT is not even allowed an accounting of its own revenues much of which is pocketed by the federal government and redistributed as "projects." We are ruled by absentee chiefs and their puppet council of yes-men. Our privacy is invaded year after year by careerists on contract who pretend to collect our opinions and then draft up programs that are good for us. Some of us are still second class, or no-class, citizens by virtue of an antique social system in modern dress. It is this social system, at least as it exists in Inuvik, that is the chief concern of my brief.

It ought to be remembered by all who tinker with this country that this is a land that is sensitive, though bitter and hard; its wounds heal slowly, its scars are permanent. It should also be kept in mind that it is inhabited by human beings who like anybody else are capable of both suffering and happiness, and who have only one life to live.

As a citizen and a voter I request that this report and letter be treated as a brief intended for the edification of our political masters, federal and territorial, and that it be given an official reading aloud and be entered into the public records.

Respectfully,

P.S. Barry

cc/ Rheams, Sivertz,  
Vallee, Trimble,  
Lynch, Hill, etc.

UTOPIA IN THE ARCTIC

A brief addressed to the  
Members of Parliament of Canada and the  
Council of the Northwest Territories by  
a Citizen of Inuvik, N.W.T.  
P.S. Barry

The old-timers in the Mackenzie Delta, Inuvik is Toy Town. And so it seems to have been planned: a toy town for toy people. The doll mother and doll father with three or four doll children live in a cute doll house "in the first community north of the Arctic Circle built to provide normal facilities of a Canadian town." The dolls are kept functioning, like "normal," by an imitation gastro-intestinal system -- the Utilidor.

Utopia in the Arctic -- at least by engineering standards. Nice and tidy. The trouble is Inuvik filled up with real people.

Genuine human beings of all kinds who quarrel, gossip, boss each other around, steal things, drown their woes or boredom in drink. Twenty-five hundred live souls who let their dogs and kids go astray, beat their wives, put up buildings where they shouldn't, burn holes in furniture, get fired, have sex with the wrong people, snub the old folks. Real people, like you meet everywhere, who moonlight, moonshine, and bootleg booze -- who sass the cops, overdraw bank accounts, throw wild parties, and tear up Utilidor steps for stove wood. Honest-to-god humans who break windows, jam the toilets with diapers and Kotex, freeze to death when drunk, spread VD, and play loud electric guitars.

People -- who can't find jobs, lock their husbands out, stick knives into each other, cheat their customers, lie, pray and beg. They run the usual gamut from saint to sinner, without regard for race, religion or upward mobility.

Brains are randomly distributed, despite education. So are wit, enterprise, ingenuity, courage and compassion.

n The engineers be damned, Inuvik is a town full of life.

It could even be described as a microcosm, except for one thing. It's a little world of lively human beings, all right, but they've been shaken up and poured out according to no system at all, or at best a burlesque of system. The absent-minded geniuses who knew a lot about ground slope and permafrost sure drew a blank on human nature. In the "world's first truly modern Arctic town" they created a social monster: the compound, grand old relic of British colonialism, is simply jazzed up by modern engineering and tuned in loud to the competitive ruckus Outside.

In dressing up a jaded antique, the master planners endowed Inuvik with a social and physical shape in which status is based on accident and luck, while natural values are irrelevant. Chief relevancy here is the Utilidor -- do you have it or don't you?

It will take some time for ornery human nature to undo the damage. Because of the Utilidor and the obsolete compound theory it disguises, the town's awkward layout will last for a long time. The hospital is farthest away from those most apt to be patients. The school is handier to the hostels and to Toy Town than to the real townspeople. Old ladies on welfare have to crawl on their hands and knees to spend their checks at the Bay. The two hostels, particularly the RC hostel, are situated in a fire trap, a long detour for the fire truck -- and there are no fire hydrants in the west end. Two of the three churches are located in the center of town instead of in neighborhoods near their people. So far, only one neighborhood store exists, and no neighborhood coffee shop or other gathering place. Social life is either uptown

I It is against these distortions, physical and social, that Inuvik as a live town is now struggling. This painful struggle is in addition to the conflict between people of two different ways of life, one group assigned to manipulate the rest "for their own good," and the rest trying to make a living as best they can in a hard country.

The struggle is not made any easier by the fact that those entitled to manipulate are temporary residents -- mere visitors, whose appearance here is often just another waystop in a career, while many of the rest, the native-born and other permanent residents, happen to be persons who are easily outshouted by intruders with a moral mission.

On one side are the self-assured, superior beings who have advantages and privileges the others don't. These are the U's noted by Reporter Charles Lynch, the supposedly doll people in the doll houses on the Utilider. The truth is, they're just as human as the rest, although they like to pretend otherwise.

On the other side is everybody else, the non-U's, who live in tired old 512's hauled from Aklavik years ago or left from construction days, in remodeled combinations of 512's and new lumber, in plywood-pasteboard combinations in zones forbidding a proper roof, cabins known as low-cost homes, frame tents, and a few trailers. More recently have been added several model build-it-yourself "ideal" bungalows which weren't so easy to assemble and pay for as the sales pitch would have it.

Significantly, non-U's usually speak of excrement by its first name. U's tend to use the word to refer to everything else but, because they hardly ever see the real thing.

### Dinosaur with a Corrugated Hide

The Utilidor is by far the weirdest sight in town. It outshines the midnight sun and the RC igloo church as a subject for visitors' photos. It is just as foreign to the inhabitants as it is to tourists.

Mounted on piles, it struts stiffly among the buildings of half the town, carrying heat and water to, and the crap fro. You can either crawl under it, find some steps over it, or take the long way around. Steps and easy crawling places must be searched out before the dark days begin. Also the places where a vicious dog might be staked just on the other side.

Utilidor pipes are insulated and covered with a corrugated metal glinting bleakly in the sun and looming darkly in the dark. It is wrong to throw stones at it. The least the engineers could have done was to have made the casing so people who don't like it could easily write "Down with the Utilidor" and other pertinent graffiti on the sides. But the Utilidor is not the sort of thing to yield minor satisfactions.

I don't know how much the Utilidor has cost the government. A person could find out, I suppose, by asking Northern Canada Power Commission which built it and operates it. It's enough to say it was — and continues to be — fabulously expensive. It's incredible that the Federal Government would allow NCPG and its consultants, Montreal Engineering Company, to erect such a dinosaur for the benefit of those whose interest in the Delta Country averages two years.

The Utilidor is a public nuisance. Maybe a public spirited hero will blow it up. It is directly related to most of Inuvik's growing pains, and it profoundly aggravates all the rest. That's because some people have it and some people don't, and the true reasons for the difference don't add up to sense in this country. The U's have it because, with a handful of exceptions,

they were hired Outside and presumably can't survive in the Arctic without it. They need "normal" life. The non-U's don't have it — and survive.

The U's are teachers, engineers, clerks, painters, carpenters, repairmen, mechanics, biologists, boilerman, typists, secretaries, technicians, RCMP, a boatbuilder, firechief, doctors, nurses, social workers, radio men, and administrators, assistants and caretakers of this and that. All are here keeping Inuvik going as a medical, educational and administrative center, although the efforts of many keep Toy Town itself going. Officers and men of the HMCS Inuvik, and their families, account for roughly one-fourth the population of Toy Town. You naturally wonder what the R Navy is doing here, but the Navy keeps its mouth shut. The answer may be "nothing."

The Utilidor is a physical barricade amongst the U's themselves. Probably Inuvik is the only town with "normal facilities" in Canada where people must crawl to visit the neighbors. Some people never do get to know the neighbors because they instinctively avoid crawling. Not that it matters: the neighbors may be gone in two weeks or two months. What matters is that all along the line the Utilidor is democratic: it gives the same overheated service year round to one and all, boss and bootlicker — from Outside, that is.

#### The Goal of Life

I've heard Utilidor life described as the goal to which Northerners ought to aspire. It's something to be worked for, earned, deserved. How? Easy. By shaping up to the "standards" of those who occupy the doll houses, improving yourself until, at last, you qualify for a civil service job that will get you "in." Some people actually believe this myth. Most who do live on the Utilidor already. But when non-U people do by chance qualify for U jobs and housing, a new rule is usually invoked; you can't be born here — you have to be hired from Outside.



You would think that in view of Ottawa's publicity about the purposes of government activity in the North, i.e. to promote progress in these inhospitable regions, the bureaucrats would like to make a good show, and get Northerners into those model Arctic-proof homes.

But it just isn't so. To Ottawa's old Arctic hands who dish out the advice from deep in the plush comfort of the Arctic Circle Club all Northerners are retarded children who must be nursed slowly away from stone-agehood. The image of civilized Canadianism set before them is the showered, insured sobriety of the middle class civil servant, the only people fit to occupy Toy Town. Anybody living in Inuvik ought to know this image is phoney. But no variations are admitted by Ottawa — at least that's the way it works out.

Meanwhile, many jobs that could be handled by Northerners with on-the-job training are thoughtlessly automated, as with the telephone system. Or are filled by personnel hired in Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, and so on, as with numerous clerk, technical and mechanical positions under high-flown qualifications. Or the work is contracted to Outside firms who bring in workers, for the sake of efficiency, and hire Northerners only as casual labor — as is threatened by the Industrial Division's plan for guide service in the NAT. Or U wives are hired in preference to native girls. And there's not much else here for people who want to "get ahead" or even earn a living.

So Outsiders get the jobs, the houses and the U. This is only one of the ramifications of the Utilidor and the social "system" it imposes. The fancy plumbing seems to back up on itself.

#### How to be a Non-U

The only qualification for being a non-U is that you don't have Utilidor service — hence these people are wildly and delightfully assorted. They don't

have the Utilidor because:

1. They were born here and can't afford it, or can't get it even if they could afford it. Some with government jobs don't have U housing because the allotment of apartments for their agency is used up by the bigwigs.
2. They came North on their own hook, can't afford it, can't get it.
3. They don't want it.

Among the non-U's are the administrator, who lives where he does by personal choice. There are also trappers, taxi-drivers, bush pilots, garbage men, truck drivers, wage workers, cleaning laddies, radio announcers, a nurse, jail matrons, airplane mechanics, laundry workers and waitresses. Also, baby sitters, small businessmen, the territorial liquor dealer, bush workers, an airlines agent, casual laborers, seamstresses, a dragline operator, painters, cat-drivers, freight handlers, prospectors, a fur trader, carpenter's helpers, meter reader, barber, theater attendant and cooks. There are a few cheerful prostitutes, the managers of a boarding place for medical cases in transit, a biologist, a candy seller, and the unemployed, indigent and aged. It's rumored the school principal is trying to join us; the CBC station manager has already.

Many non-U's have different jobs at different seasons, sometimes no income at all for several seasons. They take whatever turns up, and "manage", as Northerners do, the rest of the time. A good many live out in the bush part of the year, a few having camps in the Delta and on up-country lakes and streams that are their best, favorite or only homes. Still others have no home at all, but camp a day here, a week there with relatives and friends; these form a floating population hard to count. Some take baby sitting jobs just to get a home.

The condition of life in Tent Town, as the school kids call non-U neighborhoods, is that everybody has a honey-bucket toilet, or at least a Klim can. Some people dump their honey in the nearest vacant lot. Others collect it in plastic bags and leave it in a beerbox by the road until it disappears; presumably the garbage men take it. Plastic bags cost 19¢ each at the Bay — such is the price of sanitation in the Arctic that the trade in them is not very brisk. They are a luxury for a family of 12. If a four-bucket beerparty develops of an evening, use of plastic bags is plain squandering. People are also in the habit of just stepping outside — to save themselves and others trouble.

The original plan for Tent Town had 3 "honey houses," each a tall building with a formidable height of steps leading to two doors: one door to dump the honey, the other to get water. The two little rooms were foul; the steps were foul and slippery. MP Gene Mcneume had something to do with getting them locked up for health reasons for a while last winter. Then three or four big gas barrels were placed at the bottom of the steps. On a warmish day a bag of honey makes quite a splash as it drops into a half-filled barrel.

Those who have water barrels and can afford the fee (\$1.25 now; at mid-winter it was \$1.50 a barrel if you could get it), have water delivered, once a week if all goes well. Some government agencies do this for their employees. A few people have rigged running water systems. Others take showers at the laundry. Some people cut ice after the Mackenzie runs clear in late fall. Some simply fetch water in 50-pound milk cans or buckets as they need it. It's a touching sight during the dark days to see the lonely souls with buckets scuttling about looking for water.

Water can be gotten from the laundry -- if the outdoor tap isn't broken or frozen. There is also water at the honey houses, such as it is. People who have to get water that way are pretty careful what they do with it. You have to pack a lot of water to wash clothes for a family of nine or ten. The only other choice for "cheap" washing are four leaking, cranky machines at the town laundry -- 30¢ a load. Wash day usually means older kids stay home from school to help.

### The Utilidor Mentality

A few high-minded U's would like to see the Utilidor extended to the non-U's. These <sup>are</sup> way-out types who've discovered that non-U's may be a reasonably decent people even if they haven't got flush toilets. To them the element of luck in being U or non-U is pretty obvious. These U's are very generous about bath and laundry privileges for their few non-U acquaintances. They themselves are dependent on the Utilidor, something like unborn pigs depend on their umbilical cords. Maybe, like the pigs, they are cheerfully confident everybody should be the same to be happy. They see the Utilidor as it now is to be undemocratic.

The U's are not the only ones tied to the Utilidor as a way of Arctic life. Absentee government chiefs suffer from Utilidor mentality also. They are evidently committed to it as a main factor in town planning. They continue to develop the U end of town, building along ever more Utilidor loops ever more houses to accommodate ever more personnel from Outside to service ever more other personnel from Outside.

Inuvik badly needs, among many things, inexpensive group housing for some of the "floating" population of young working people. A YMCA survey almost a year ago urged that some such facility be built at once. But Ottawa chiefs cannot comprehend anything but an elaborate Outside-type Y on the Utilidor.

The cost of such buildings is formidable, and budgeting beyond the routine always takes years of maneuvering. It will be a long time before Inuvik gets a Y, if ever. Latest word is that a Y will be built in Yellowknife instead.

Those good grim visionaries are so hung up on the Utilidor they can't figure out how to give the kids a break. They hint that the "community" help itself in this regard. But the "community" with enough feeling to tackle a project of this sort amounts to the same handful who are always reaching into their pockets to finance this and that. They aren't rich and they are beginning to feel bled. The rest are too poor or don't give a damn.

Meanwhile, well-meaning U's suggest that the kids "do something for themselves like we did when we were their age." They forget there were more opportunities available Outside, that they had more and better education to begin with themselves, and that conditions were not so hard. Why others should be required to be more ingenious than the U's is hard to see. Most of the floaters would be happy with a little more privacy than they have, and a place to cache their belongings safely. They aren't above heating wash water in a teakettle -- they always did anyway when they weren't living in the hostels.

The Utilidor hang-up is also responsible for the disgraceful and expensive service system in the non-U neighborhoods. Had Ottawa sunk half its Utilidor money into a democratic, everybody's equal water delivery and garbage pickup system, backed by efficient garage facilities to handle inevitable mid-winter breakdowns, Inuvik would now be a town to be proud of. Instead, water and ice are dear, when and if delivered. Honey is irregularly collected. The town stinks of burning garbage and rubbish; dogs and ravens scatter refuse if it isn't burned. This is sanitation in a region where public health is supposed to be of paramount importance and in a town where the government has financed a "normal" water and sewage system.

## Two Scenes

U's and non U's are separated from each other by the downtown section which includes the great spread of the federal school, its two hostels and their attending religious facilities.

U's are necessarily grouped in one big ghetto straddling the main drag, Mackenzie Road, between down-town and the hospital. There bulldozers have created a level wasteland where once was muskeg and taiga. All the people are equipped with clothes dryers, so it's hard to tell wind direction, summer or winter, by looking out the window.

The houses and <sup>a</sup>partments sit on piles, hence T-y Town's joking name, Hemorrhoid Hill. Pet dogs are chained to the steps or to Utilidor piles. Shortcut paths are determined by location of Utilidor steps.

Evidently buildings were painted by a progressive kindergartner, with each fourplex in four colors, striped. Reason for the color carnival is to "relieve the monotony of the country" -- which includes rolling spruce-covered hills snuggling the town, the bush-lined waterways of the Delta, and glimpses of the Richardson Mountains beyond in the West. Even so, there is a lurking inhospitality about the enclave that smacks of Toronto or Edmonton. Steps to the doors are somehow not inviting, and not just because of the doors. They are slippery and too high. The second story windows glare down disdainfully. Whole buildings seem about to walk away on their many stumpy legs. The place <sup>desolate</sup> is particularly desolate in winter.

Non-U's in their down to earth cottages and cabins are scattered over hill and dale among willows, spruce and birch, seemingly enjoying the disorderly variety of themselves and their situation. Except in deep midwinter, the clotheslines flap with worn, washed and mended merchandise from Eaton's and

the Bay. Sled dogs are staked to one side or in vacant lots near home. Shortcut paths lie close by the houses. You can hear people talking together as they pass, and they can hear the thump, laughter and music of life inside.

In summer, washing machines, washtubs, stoves and water barrels are moved outdoors to make more room. Children live outdoors day and night in the yards, streets, puddles, bushes and trees. Here and there is the spicy odor of honey.

In winter, yards accommodate sleds, toboggans, sawed ice, perhaps a woodpile and sawhorse, crates of possessions that don't fit indoors. Some belongings are kept on the roof -- fish, tools, snowshoes, maybe a caribou head -- within easy reach, but out of the way of dogs and kids. Some people build a snow porch if they can find the right snow. During dark days the frosted trees glow amongst the helter-skelter squares of home lights.

#### Social Life in Utopia

"Here in the North, the fancier you get the more you got to lose." -- An Old-timer.

It's suspected there may be an exclusive camaraderie developing among non-U's, embracing all those who empty their own honey buckets and scrounge for water. U's and non-U's live so far from each other it's hard for the U's to keep track of just what is going on down in Tent Town. For all their aloofness, their habits of over-organizing everything they do, their wealth of belongings and adventures, U's are one and all fascinated by non-U's. There is no more intriguing subject of gossip than the comings and goings, real and imagined, of those strange souls "at the other end." There's even a wistfulness about some U's, as if they wished they belonged. The wistfulness grows upon them the longer they stay in town.

A few U's sense their own futile impermanence here, and some may even feel they're missing something -- the real life of the town, maybe, or even real life. Perhaps deeper, more lasting friendships. Or the chance of knocking some shape into this shapeless town. These people are noticeable boosters of Inuvik's proliferating clubs which are always looking for good works to accomplish, or a reasonable facsimile.

Truly they can accomplish little in the way of profound improvement. A flutter at Brownies or some such mickeymouse project is about par. First off, the town is so ensnared in the conflicting red tape and empire building of agencies having a stake here that nothing serious can be done unless a couple of remote chiefs choose to move. The various head offices<sup>s</sup> bestowing thoughtful change on Inuvik are located in Fort Smith, Edmonton, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa, London and home. It's not known whether the brass in these places communicate with each other. Nor is it certain that Inuvik is more than a speck on their office maps. Absentee chiefs who do chance to tour their holdings in the Arctic are impressive for their obtuseness and the size of their retinues of press and radio men.

Secondly, when there is a project in the wind, the de-goodniks from Toy Town dominate the policy, inspire the activities, do all the talking. Some feel justified because they've had "more experience." Others see it to be their duty to "improve the natives." The projects usually fade when the moving spirit moves on. Non-U's having a healthy wish not to be improved stay away. A few content themselves with token participation, or just send the kids if it's that sort of thing. U's feel outraged when their earnest efforts are unappreciated. It doesn't occur to them that non-U's may feel they haven't a voice or choice in U-inspired activities, or that many projects aren't to their taste. Besides, a person may be tired after shifting tubs of washwater on and off the stove.



Curling is thought to be a storming success among both U's and non-U's. But curling as the town's main recreation (and preoccupation) was decided on by U's. Only a few non-U's take part. Most non-U's can't afford curling and the heavy expenditure for social drinking it involves. Still others can't juggle their work like U's can to suit the relentless curling schedules.

Curlers loudly declare that the rink is a big step along Progress Road, but there still isn't any neighborhood recreation building for non-curlers. When a group of native people proposed this winter that community recreation money be invested in a native hall in Tent Town they were angrily shouted down by U's who saw the proposal as biased, unfair and undemocratic.

Aside from the PC and Anglican church groups, the only other organizations with more than token mixing are for children. The hostels supply much of the captive membership.

About the only other social mixing of adults is in the hotel, where the cocktail lounge is dominated by U's and the beerparlor is the precinct of non-U's. Many natives feel deliberately excluded by the emphasis on dress in the dining room.

Toy Town's social style is fairly frantic, geared to keeping U's busy in ways they are used to, and to keep them from missing TV. There are tupperware parties, important meetings, coffee gossips, farewell wassails, and fund-raising affairs including waistline teas, raffles, and what a non-U described succinctly as "baked elephant sales." Lately, the Territorial government has been investing some of its meager public moneys in recreation clubs -- pistol shooting, cross country skiing, wix weight-lifting, badminton, ~~ix~~ etc., these involving competition on all levels, with winners getting trips here and there to compete with other competitors. The all-out emphasis on recreation now interferes with serious school work -- and probably with work

of other sorts. People seem to be playing all the time, or getting ready to play something, at public expense.

Also there are dances, and these have committees, decorations, entertainment, supper menus, tickets, doorprizes, and drinks. Some parties are staged with magazine food, people in proper proportions and plenty of booze.

But being somewhat at loose ends at the end of the world, U's tend also to be impromptu partiers: stopping in to say Hello can mean the beginning of a drinking bout lasting for several days, ranging all over Toy Town, to the bar, the Legion and the Curling "ink, gaining and losing persons as it goes. The talk is loud, the record players deafening. Accessories in season, such as cars, boats and skidoos -- and once an Otter aircraft -- may be commandeered to enliven the occasion. Fights and accidents happen, but rarely is police notice attracted. After it's over, these people speak of having been hammered right out of their minds.

Typically, U's are an unsettled element; they seem to be souls attached to nowhere, nomads driving careers from one government oasis to another. Some kind of brainwashing Outside has convinced them of their own superiority to other mortals, and they believe they are in the north as an example of right living for the benighted inhabitants. They hope to infect others with their own strident ambitiousness.

Infection actually runs more in the line of VD. "That disease" is kept current by the constant turnover of government and military personnel, as well as by barge crews in summer. Some U's attribute the wide incidence of clap to low morals among the native population. They are unaware that it is the White Man's continuing gift to the North, and the first case of it in the Delta, as near as can be determined, can be credited to Sir John Franklin's crew. The Navy is still in action today.

In the big cities of Canada, U's were able to avoid the sight of raw life, and to hide their own raw liveliness from neighbors and friends, perhaps pretending to suppress it in themselves. In Inuvik, nothing such can be hidden. U's profess to be horrified by what they see — people acting like people do everywhere. Here U wives discover what their husbands have always been up to, and vice versa.

The revelation only deepens the hypocrisy. Because non-U's are not so pretentious about human nature, U's feel suspicious of them, even afraid. They believe non-U's need to be "supervised" more than ordinary people. Worse, native northerners, nearly all non-U, are regarded by quite a few U's as unsavory, probably dangerous, usually drunk, most likely shiftless and obviously stupid and immoral. People with these opinions don't hesitate to express them, sometimes in public. They try to indoctrinate newcomers with these notions, ignoring that the description fits lots of U's.

There is also a sanctimonious nosiness on the part of certain U's about racial mixing. This habit is inherited from the British. Since the people of the Delta are pretty thoroughly "mixed," they are subjected to some rude scrutiny and gossip. The term half-breed (or *metis*) still exists officially, though what it's supposed to connote is anybody's guess. Some people think it means half-human. "White status" is a newer nicer expression, with about the same insulting meaning.

Bad manners of the invading U's could be described endlessly. Pushiness and belittling are common. Some have a way of referring to the "native problem" — whatever that is — in the same tone used by an up-river NWT Councillor on the radio last year. Should some native-born Northerners latch on to a microphone they would be within rights to talk about the White Man Problem.

Native Northerners are well aware of these U-type opinions of themselves, and they aren't cheered by them. In this regard the Utilidor is worse than a public nuisance. It so sets apart and shelters a privileged class that they can't appreciate the inhabitants of the territory they are invading. The harsh judgement of the elite undermines the pride and self-respect of a proud and respectable people who are living in home territory, their ancestral land. So is raised the question of what is morality anyway, and who is qualified to judge it in others.

Some of the worst offenders are teachers. Although they have the best opportunity to be friends with an interesting, resourceful and hardy people, they are likely to be the most vigorous expounders of moral bunkum outside the church. With a few exceptions they do not interest themselves in the ways of the families of their pupils — except to condemn them by implication and direct remarks. Nor have they any knowledge of the history of the country where they find themselves, although every native child is personally related to that history. Most of the teachers arrived here complete, culturally speaking, and have nothing to learn themselves. They may dabble in certain cultural quaintnesses, but their job is to manipulate others during school hours and to amuse themselves the rest of the time. Quite a few of those others, bless 'em, still stubbornly resist being manipulated.

Still, a couple of teachers should be included among the Wistful U's. One, an energetic young science teacher, says he considers his first year here a failure. "I didn't reach a single native kid," he explains. "Why?" It could be the social system that segregates him from the very kids who might find kitchen sink science fascinating.

### Social Life of a People at Home

"Taxation without representation is tyranny,  
but representation without taxation is worse."  
--Absentee Chief on an Arctic Tour.

Social life among non-U's is that of a people at home. Elite views to the contrary, family life here has a private warmth and wholesomeness one rarely finds Outside anymore except in country places. This wholesomeness is independent of material goods. Here, the family is usually larger and more inclusive than Outsiders are used to, perhaps embracing grandparents, an uncle or aunt, a daughter's boyfriend, adopted children, as well as the mother, father and their own kids. Family ties are far stronger than Outsider's presume, and far more coherent than among U's where the small family frequently serves as a vehicle for chasing success.

It is true that some families are plagued by overcrowding, poverty and periodic drunkenness as they are anywhere. Even so the members may be strongly bound by affection and loyalty. The family here is still a remarkably staunch bastion against the intrusions and disruptions of Outside influences on traditional ways. It's a pity the school is sabotaging this main strength of the people which could be so useful to the teachers.

Most of the folks in Tent Town have kinship connections in Aklavik, Fort MacPherson, Tuktoyaktuk, Sachs Harbour, etc. Since Inuvik is a medical and educational center, the traffic to and from these points is considerable, and long visits from relatives or friends are important social events. People speak sincerely of missing someone who has just left town, or of being lonely for a person they haven't seen for a long time.

Some of the restlessness disparaged by impatient U's results from the new conditions of life Inuvik is imposing on people. Those who were brought up in small settlements from which they moved out seasonally to hunt or camp yearn to be traveling in certain weather. For many the best home was in the

bush, not in town. The best life was on the move, on the trapline, hunting, fishing, rattling. The loneliness of many persons for the bush and rivers is acute, now that they are tied to jobs in Inuvik or under pressure to find wage work here. Rhythms of the seasons, months, dark days and light nights always affect them profoundly, and it is painful not to be able to respond.

Other non-U's have compromised with the conditions of the country and have committed themselves to it by marriage or permanent settlement. Their hope is to hang on here through hard times as well as good, although the government monopoly of opportunity, the snarl of red tape, and the gaping voids of precedent often conspire to drive them out. <sup>(certainly, not many people of this persuasion have been able to stay)</sup> A native point out <sup>ed</sup> to me that a white man without government connections is "pretty much lost" in these parts, not even having trapping to fall back on. Even so, an easier feeling exists among all non-U's than does among U's. Almost all have known each other more or less well for years. They know what to expect of each other, and they are usually easy going and tolerant.

There being no neighborhood meeting place as yet, the plain old-time dances with jigs, reels and squares that enliven holidays in Tuk and MacPherson don't occur in Inuvik. People say they want their own neighborhood hall for their own kind of dances. Eventually they will get one on their own, even if they can't count on support from the rest of Inuvik. Meantime, the occasional old-time dances at Peffer's Peck Hall downtown have to serve, though they are considered out of the way, not quite to the people's taste, overcrowded, and often spoiled by boisterous cut-ups and teen-age twisters.

Anyway, musicians seek each other out when they are in town. There are more good fiddlers, guitar players and harmonica artists in Tent Town than in any neighborhood of its size Outside. Almost every man and boy can play

something, and most of the accomplished musicians have played together so often they know each other's style cold. Impromptu dances are apt to go on all night in somebody's house, and birthdays and weddings are good excuses for a dance. Lately, private drum dances have been revived. These are entirely different in atmosphere from the exhibitions staged in the school, for which drummers now demand payment -- a shocking show of commercialism to the U's.

There is much casual visiting in Tent Town. During visiting hours the hospital, particularly the TB ward, swings with sociability and music. Strolling is a happy pastime in good weather; even U's have picked up the habit.

Parties are always spontaneous, and a person who buys a case of beer or a bottle usually goes to a friend's house to share it. Non-U's also go on binges and end up fighting, but they worry more than U's about getting picked up by police. Some complain of being arrested, without warrant, in their own houses and yards, and of being handled with undue roughness. The jail is occupied almost solely by natives. There is no reliable lawyer handy to look into these matters.

Social life among non-U's has a refreshing spontaneity. They know how to enjoy each other's company without the help of liquor, although they drink their share of it. They have a good time when they feel like it -- not necessarily when they are supposed to. "Fun," doesn't require elaborate rituals or equipment.

Since the first missionaries appeared in the Delta Country about 100 years ago there have always been moral advocates on hand to teach the people to be ashamed of themselves. More lately in Inuvik, this sort of pressure has been stepped up. Both by omission and by direct instruction the teachers and the curriculum itself imply that the old ways, the old folks, even the

children's parents have no value at all. The lesson goes home with the kids.

For the first time in the history of the North, the children here have a chance at a decent education -- one they need for self-defense and self-respect. Some of them are getting it, in spite of the competition from Outsider's kids for school space and the teacher's attention. But others are not getting it at all -- children handicapped by effects of long illness, others by personalities or circumstances with which the school is not sympathetic. Many adults who could pick up reading and arithmetic skills badly needed for better jobs find the teachers unapproachable under the going system.

The Education Division's recruiting program is partly to blame, emphasizing status, pay and working conditions, and so attracting too many teachers for whom these professional "standards" are of first importance. But the social structure of Inuvik enforces these attitudes, and destroys the good intentions of others for whom teaching could be a way of life. Teachers live in a different world from the people who need them most. That they even avoid visiting their pupils homes is a hurtful comment.

Toytown and the Utilidor also stand as powerful comments. Still I have never heard a non-U speak of Toy Town with envy, though some speak of it with scorn. Somebody, trying to be good-minded, said of Toy Town people, "Gee, they must be really clean."

Given their style of life, the traditions of quiet settlement and bush life, and knowing the pressures on them, it should be plain to all why many non-U's feel uncomfortable in the company of U's and are apathetic about U-dominated organizations such as Home and School.

The newness of Inuvik as a settlement and the irrelevance of organized effort to their former life is also explanation for the slowness of non-U organizations to appear. But these are coming. Two already have taken hold,



the Women's Institute and Innuit Cooperative, the latter founded for mutual help in house-building. An embryo town council, based on the permanent residents and property owners, is just emerging after nurturing by an unusually sensitive administrator, T.H. Batters.

These groups have no interest in mere busy work. They concentrate on providing the cooperative strength and wisdom needed to deal with changed conditions. They'll likely be around for a while, regardless of how slowly they grow or how cautiously they move.

Toward U's and other visitors, native-born non-U's are <sup>consistently polite. They are</sup> generally reserved and dignified, partly because of shyness, and partly because of custom. They are distinctly more sensitive to the <sup>o</sup> moods and feelings of others than are U's. Though hurt many times over, most manage not to betray their feelings, although drinking can bring the resentments to the surface. Other non-U's are not so stoical and are apt to sound off in defense of themselves.

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The Utilidor at very least is a symbol of separation between U's and non-U's. It distinguishes the kinds of people who are sociable in different ways for different reasons. One group is on home territory, their minds full of people, places and events with which they have repeated contacts; many of them are struggling to master new conditions of life imposed upon them by others, and a few have compromised with conditions for the privilege of living here. On the other side are the intruders, people with no connections at all, but impatiently riding herd on the rest, and trying to fill up a time and a place with a social life of some sort.

### The Real Inuvik

Gene Beaume, Northwest Territories M.P. once said he was aware that the North's only really vast undiscovered resource is the tourist from Outside. Well, the travel posters are up already. More tourists come to the Delta Country and the coast each year, winter and summer. The hotel, which has begun to deteriorate again after a long season of middling good management, sometimes can't handle the trade. U's have to take in visiting Lions and curlers. Non-U's should be doing so. It could mean a real continuing income for the people here in many kinds of tourist services.

Before we start losing business, the Utilidor ought to be declared the dinosaur it is, and plans to extend it should be abandoned. It is too long now. It serves the essential operations it ought to serve -- hospital, school, hostels, laundry, etc. But it serves a lot of people it shouldn't, hundreds of soft-living U's.

Instead, Inuvik's non-U sanitation and water system must be modernized -- and soon, if early opportunities to cash in on tourists are not to be missed. Small inexpensive tourist accommodations and cafes are more apt to appear if the water and sanitary service could be relied on. Other towns without piped services accommodate tourists very well, but they have efficient cheap public service. Of course there will arise that tired old argument from the U's: "But we shouldn't give it to them. They'll have to earn it." What about the other Thems who never earned U status at all -- at least not in this country.

What's more, the Utilidor is more than a symbol of social difference. In some ways it represents a vicious division between people living in the same town. It's risky these days to be snooty about race, and strained relations

between U's and non-U's have been let go too long. They could be a menace to the tourist industry.

Apparently U people believe they ARE Inuvik, and that their opinions are valid and their flapdoodle matters. It is essential for good will that tourists avoid these people as they damage the reputation and pride of the true Northerner and distract the visitor with a phoney view of life in the Arctic.

The Northerner loves his part of the country, he is proud of it, he knows it better than anyone else, and can get along in it more efficiently and cheaply than any Outsiders. He is happy to show it off to visitors, to recount its history and his part in it, and display his remarkable personality -- he wants to be seen at his best.

But he cannot be at his best when his pride is undermined by government policy that coddles the short-term opinionated "visiting resident" who runs him down behind his back. Civil servants have built careers on the needs of Northerners -- a fancy way of exploiting others in the name of doing good. And Northerners still need jobs, houses, and cheap water -- not to mention their self-respect and a voice in their own destiny.

As a native-born Northerner said when he heard a politician discussing the "native problem:" "If it wasn't for us They wouldn't have anything to do."

So far as he was concerned they, with all the flap and publicity, hadn't done a thing to improve his lot. They had only given him a defensive attitude about his own ways, new wounds to his pride, more complications to fuss with, and a firmer than ever belief that the Outsider will never be as good as the Northerner at managing to survive in the Arctic.

It's my conviction that Toy Town on the Utilidor will never be the real Inuvik, though our absentee chiefs may find that bone hard to swallow. Few of the U's stay around long enough to bother with. Those who choose to stay manage to amputate themselves from the Utilidor, jump the barriers and find a new neighborhood and sense of community among the non-U's.

Here, the purpose of government activity is clear -- though it always has been muddled in the Ottawa mind. It is this: that a hard-times part of Canada needs help to become economically and politically self-sufficient. That doesn't mean placing a population of independent and unique human beings at the mercy of a herd of sanctimonious civil servants and dry-ice sailors who can't pee in anything but a flush toilet. And it doesn't mean selling out the few resources of this hard-times country to predators from Outside who will only use the people as flunkies. It doesn't mean belittling the people, their history and their ways so that the young people are anxious only to clear out for good.

The Federal Government could help by combing the hair out of its eyes to see where the emphasis belongs. Some pointed questions ought to be asked of the Navy. The RCMP should be required to clarify its ambiguous attitude toward certain Canadian citizens here in the Delta Country, and to get serious about training a native police force. The Postoffice should institute house-to-house mail delivery. Every agency, in fact, including the Crown corporations and private business, should be scrutinized for job-making possibilities -- for the sake of Northerners and not necessarily for "efficiency", Outside-style. Certainly the deadwood should be pruned from all government departments represented here. Teachers and social workers should have their brains rewashed; they should be moved into small houses in Tent Town -- for their own good and the good of the many people who need them as neighbors.

The rest of the U's in Inuvik should be downgraded socially, simply by sending our absence chiefs here incognito with instructions to find accommodations as best they can in Tent Town only.

What a nice lot of spare housing would appear. This housing could be converted to justifiable uses, such as two Y's, a receiving home for children, a new medical transit center, and a home for the chronically ill. Offices for visiting specialists and the dentist are needed somewhere besides in the overcrowded hospital. A couple of public baths would be handy about where the downtown RCMP residences are. Tent Town, meanwhile, could use some simple subsidized mass group housing for young people -- a settlement house, maybe, to be run by the Salvation Army, and a co-op dorm for girls, supervised by a committee of permanent residents. These would help sop up the floating population of single young job-seekers and casual workers who drift in and out of town and never land anywhere long enough to be counted. Beyond that, loan terms should be revised to encourage all kinds of people from Toy Town to settle in Tent Town.

There are plenty of ways to make a decent reality out of our scrowy Utopia. But the cockeyed "system" can best be reformed by imposing a modernized honey-bucket culture on as many "visiting residents" as possible. They might find real life pungent, but rewarding.