

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
5TH COUNCIL, 33RD SESSION**

TABLED DOCUMENT NO. 7-33



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

TABLED DOCUMENT NO. 7

LETTER TO ROBERT PORRITT

from

E. R. AND ROSE DEMELT.

Letter to Robert Porritt
From E. R. and Rose DeMelt

October 10, 1966,
Rocher River, N.W.T.

Dear Bobby:

Now being that the row is all over about the Capital, probably Fort Smith and Hay River won't be at each other's throats any longer. You may be able to get some business done for the Northwest Territories in general. You and all the other Councillors should read the Indian record, Trapping as a Career, in the September issue, and take one with you to your Council meeting in November. This is the same theory that I've had and talked about for the last 20 years, and when the N.W.T. talks about making jobs for 9,000 Indians that are coming, they are crazy. There is probably room for three or four thousand more trappers right in Rocher River. There is room for 50 to 70 trappers, but if they coax them into the town of Fort Smith, Resolution and Yellowknife, and give them Welfare, build them nice houses there so they stay, it will be awful hard to get men enough to harvest the crop of fur we have here. Three families with 15 children did move back here this fall, and their kids aren't going to school. There really isn't any use of educating kids when there is no work for them after they get their education, and when they and their families are living on relief all during the time they are getting their education. They still want to live on Welfare after they get it.

The government has spoiled pretty nearly all the Indians in the N.W.T. by coaxing them into the big towns and educating them. Rocher River used to have about 100 trappers with families. They all made a good living and bought big boats. Now there are only about 30 trappers. They are still making good livings without any welfare help, but there's about four or five families still in Resolution who have got permits to make beer or brew. They are living on welfare and laughing at the people here for trapping. I have managed to keep this town under control so they have a little bit of self respect, but it's getting a little harder every year, and I am getting so old I don't care much any more. It's really time some of you smart people, like yourself and Kauser and the rest of the Council, start to think what's going to happen in the N.W.T. in the next 20 years. At the rate that you have degenerated the Indians in the last 10 years, I don't expect to be around to see it, but you may remember some of these things and look back at them and wonder why the government was so crazy.

I hope this will help you at your Council meeting. If anybody in the Council talks about this, tell them to come to Rocher River and get in touch with me or check with Father Brown at Colville Lake who wrote this article in Indian Record, which you should have with you at the Council meeting. I think he has more sense than all the elected Councillors and the appointed one from Ottawa.

Sincerely,

'E. R. and Rose DeMelt'

P.S. Send me a copy of Hansard for your November meeting; the one we have here has been very useful. If it costs anything, send it collect.