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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

TABLED DOCUMENT NO. 1

I table the attached brief submitted by Mrs. P. S. Barry,
a citizen of Inuvik. This brief is addressed to the
Council of the Northwest Territories.

B. G. Sivertz,
Commissioner

A THIN AND TENDER SKIN

A brief presented to the Northwest Territories Council
by P. S. Barry, citizen and property-owner,
Inuvik, N. W. T.

"A society is renewed when its humblest
element acquires a value." - Ignazio Silone.

In the hilly bush country about 100 miles up the Anderson River from the scrub-willow plains of the Beaufort Sea coast is a low sod-roofed cabin and a high stage with a crooked leg.

The native trappers who visit the camp in winter write messages to each other on strips of cardboard tacked along the cracks between the cabin logs. There are wistful references to the chicks in Inuvik, terse hard-luck stories, records of game sighted, regards to friends who might stop by later. And scrawled large and bold is this tribute:

Hail Happy Land!

Hail Happy Land -- this is what the native of the Northwest Territories, at home in his wilderness, thinks about his great piece of earth. He is moved to salute his homeland with joyous affection.

Hail Happy Land -- a celebration of the beauty and the risk of being in harmony with your surroundings. Happy Land -- where all men are equal -- provided they can survive. The land is yours as far as you can travel and as long as you can endure. The gamble may be great, but so is freedom's scope, if your resourcefulness is of sufficient measure. The risks are yours, but so are the decisions.

Hail Happy Land! The native is at peace in his home, at home in the solitude of the wilderness.

And what of this man when he comes to town, when he leaves solitude for society? Is he still the equal of every man? Are the decisions his? Or only the risks? Where is the harmony? Where is the peace? What scope his freedom? How valued his resourcefulness and endurance? Is his homeland really his? Where is happiness now?

* * *

A government is an expression of the ideals of the society that shapes it -- and these ideals embrace society's definition of

happiness. If a man is to be as happy in society as he is in solitude, the shape of the government is quite relevant. His version of happiness must be legitimately included in the social ideals that shape the government.

In the Northwest Territories we have one dominant intrusive society imposing its ideals including its own concept of happiness and how to get it upon a more passive society, one that has been, and in important ways still is in harmony with the land.

It is said that this is the way of the world, the way things always have been and always will be.

We of western democracies have been conditioned to a faith in democracy as an evolutionary process of culture and intellect. At the same time we have been conditioned to a contradictory faith: that we have arrived at a peak of cultural and intellectual perfection. But I have only to read the newspapers from Outside to be reminded that one of these assumptions is right now being challenged in the name of the other, even as far north of the riot belt as the Pribilof Islands. The challenge is so serious that we must now scrutinize all aspects of our culture in hopes of finding some elasticity, some flexibility by which we can justify ourselves as human beings.

After all, as the Eskimo and the Indian well know, the main point is not getting rich, but staying alive.

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All of us in the North look forward to the findings of the Carrothers Commission now inquiring into the state of government in the Northwest territories. But I am disturbed by the emphatic repetition of one of the commission's terms of reference. That is, that the system of self-government to be contrived for us must be one we can pay for. Why must such a hard condition be imposed on residents of the long neglected North when it has never been applied to Canadians in the hinterlands and the Maritimes?

I wonder if in the course of its investigations the Carrothers Commission will encounter works on ecology. This is the study of the intricate relationships of the land and the life, the economics of biology. Ecologists say the economy of the North had reached climax

conditions before the White Man appeared on the scene; that the inhabitants of the land had, up to that time, gotten all that could be gotten out of the land without damaging it. They were supremely efficient. It is significant that there were no rich men among the inhabitants of the North, and that there was no social system based on the acquisition of goods. Goods as the basis of social status evolved in herding and farming societies.

The White Man is a formidable creature. He can make gardens bloom in wastelands. He can transform a Paradise into a desert. But he cannot change the tilt of the earth's axis and so alter the basic condition of life in the North. Here is the fallacy that blurs the vision of the good grim designers of the North's unease.

The Northerner knows the limitations of his land, regardless of his education. He has always accepted those limitations, lived within them. The Outsider continues to defy them. Everywhere in the North now you can see scars, ruins and relics of this defiance. As the Dewline is "phased out" there will be more ghostly reminders of the futility of the Outsider's extravagant enterprises.

Our Happy Land has a thin and tender skin. There are many profound reasons why its wounds never really heal, why the grand schemes are abandoned: the permafrost, the low precipitation, the nature of the soil and vegetation, the relative scarcity of bacteria, the dark days and light nights, the short growing season, late breakup and early freeze-up, the direction of river flow, the number of major rivers, the presence of the Pre-Cambrian Shield, Hudson's Bay and the Arctic Ice Pack, patterns of storms, and so on.

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If our Happy Land has a thin and tender skin, the same can be said of the people. Their morale has been steadily and deliberately sabotaged by the White Man and his culture. Their efforts to come to terms with Outsiders have been frustrated by the contradictions, hypocrisies and rivalries of those assuming charge of their affairs. Almost every feature of the Outside culture pressed upon them says:

"You are no good. You and your parents and their parents, and all your ways. You are no good. If it weren't for us you would have nothing."

Are these accusations true? Is the native Northerner a lesser being than the Outsider, the White Man, who presumes to be his superior?

I say emphatically this is false. First, I deduce that the native-born Northerner is likely to be superior human stock simply because he exists. He has survived the rigorous Northern conditions which ruthlessly weed out the unintelligent, the unimaginative, the weak and the cowardly. Second, there is direct evidence: When judged -- not by their education and possessions -- but by truer measures of human intelligence -- namely, wit, compassion, tolerance, imagination and resourcefulness -- the Northerners I've known are far superior to other Canadians. And the same holds true for Northerners by settlement.

Why then cannot the Northerner be respected for what he does know, for what he can do, for what he has endured -- and especially for his dimensions of thought the Outsider lacks?

But the native is expected to pay for reasonably decent treatment with a kind of grovelling gratitude toward those who claim to know what is best for him. Some meet the Outsider with apology: "Maybe I haven't been grateful enough."

In the East, the right kind of native is who works for 24-hours a day for \$10.00 a day, is properly picturesque for color photos, and weeps when the boss leaves for Outside. His character has been delineated for us by Outside propagandists who insist this human being is "uncivilized". In the West, the right kind of native models himself as much as possible on the middleclass civil servant from Southern Canada. Few variations are admitted.

Naturally, there are a number of Northerners who do not choose to conform to the wishes of the Outsiders, that is to be like pet dogs. There are many more who cannot conform, not even in self-defence. Token conformity is the solution for others. Those who can, take off for the wilderness and peace of mind.

All told, these are painful times. The trauma, now that the pressure is in earnest, is greater than during the disturbances of the whaling era. Then, the people were exploited to exploit the land; now they are

being alienated from the land itself, from their own human nature and from each other. There is a social disease abroad in the North far more destructive than VD. It is called anomie.

The damage has been done to the people and their land. We don't go back, only forward. This is the way it always has been, it is said.

* * *

In spite of an occasional run of luck, the Northerner was always poor -- poor because his land is poor. Most of the limited productivity of the land has been exploited or casually damaged by Outsiders during the past century or so. The few discoveries remaining will also be exploitative, with benefits accruing to Outside interests which can afford the high capital investments necessary for extraction. In the end, extraction is final. The Northerner will derive very little benefit from extraction unless he can add value by his own labour, skill and imagination. The automated character of modern processing industries and the stubborn insistence that automation is an uncontrollable and "necessary evil" does not allow much hope here.

What's more, the Northerner does not derive much apparent benefit even from the exploration for mineral resources. Leases are granted to Outside investors with no regard for land damage control. Fees vanish into the federal treasury without being accounted for to the true owners of the land. Never have Northerners been consulted as to the use of their community lands by public and private agencies operating in the North. The hordes of public agents sent here to "improve the North" capture most of the funds the Federal government pours into the country -- mostly in the form of wages, salaries and living improvements-- they invest the money Outside, and eventually depart without adding to the cultural or economic wealth of the Northern community. Worse, the Crown never paid the Eskimo people a nickel for their territories, although this is a violation of the spirit of both British and native common law. As for the Northern Indians, the Crown never met the terms of the treaty under which their lands were acquired for Canada.

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I think it safe to assume that -- given the limitations of their poor land -- the inhabitants of the Northwest Territories, particularly those in the Arctic, will never be any richer than they are now. Most will probably be poorer -- there are more people to share the limited wealth, even should they get all that is coming to them. The best they can hope for under the present system is that a few of their children -- those who manage to ride full distance with the system of mass education -- might replace some of the civil servants from Outside.

There are obligations here. Canada is not likely to cede her Northern claims outright. She likes to be an "Arctic Power", geopolitics being what it is.

So there is the obligation of those lucky enough to have been born in the rich lands of the temperate zone toward those born less lucky -- those who, while they will never be rich, still can sometimes think of themselves as happy and at home in the North. There is the obligation of those who inherit the benefits of the exploiters toward those who inherit the losses of the exploited. There is the obligation of those who have stolen something precious -- a people's dignity. There is also the obligation of father to child.

In some ways, the lucky are grudgingly paying off some of their obligations. Welfare, medicine, education and certain material help are forthcoming, though it is increasingly being questioned whether these "donations" are actually equal to the benefits extracted by Southern Canadians. Regardless, these social services will have to be improved, and made more relevant to Northern conditions. More important, jobs will have to be created, jobs suited to the Northerner and to the conditions of the North, jobs arising from the development and encouragement of small private businesses, jobs that make use of the Northerner's knowledge and capabilities. All these contributions will have to be continued -- as they are for other "poor" provinces in Canada -- and for as long as Northern people exercise their right to live in their homeland.

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But there will have to be something more. This something involves an issue which directly confronts the western democracies. Now, in 1966, The answer that Canada or any other democracy gives to this challenge will decide whether our ideals are viable and dynamic, or whether they are moribund.

The poor -- our own poor -- have given us notice. They are demanding a voice in their own affairs -- whether they can pay for it or not. Up to now democracy has been the exclusive privilege of those who could pay for it. The more you pay, the more democracy you get. The more space you buy in a newspaper, the more freedom of the press you get. Justice goes to those who can hire a lawyer. Legislation benefits those financing the most active lobby.

Naturally, there is sturdy resistance to the demand that this system be changed. The rich would rather be philanthropists. There's more glory in a donation than there is in a tax. And it's easy to fool yourself that it's cheaper. Besides, the poor are no more apt to make decisions good for the rich than the rich will make decisions good for the poor.

But arguments, excuses and delays will not avail much longer. The impoverished, the uneducated, the dispossessed, the alienated can hear each other now. They were much easier to put down in the old days before the transistor radio.

Do establishments react only to crisis, to overt threat of revolution? I would like to be optimistic, but I've read some history and a lot of newspapers.

* * *

Other than a single overworked member of Parliament for the whole sprawling Territories, the people of any status here have no real and effective voice in their own affairs. Genuine participatory democracy does not exist here at any level for anyone. The decisions of virtually any popularly-based council can be over-ridden at anytime by Outside authority. Agents of the Federal government occupy positions of power in most every council; on the excuse that "the people need guidance" they dictate the councils' development, structure and activities. What's

more, we are allowed no accounting of our revenues, and people are being taxed without a voice in how the taxes are spent. In truth, the N. W. T. is still a colony where the people are the subjects of public servants and the agents of other Outside interests -- our Sacred Walrus.

To be sure, the atmosphere seems on the surface a benevolent one, but it is demeaning and authoritarian all the same. Resentment is growing.

In a democracy public servants must be answerable to the public they serve. This is not so in the N. W. T. Here, public servants are answerable ultimately to a few politicians in the cabinet whose fate is the whim of remote pockets of voters somewhere in Canada. So remote is the connection that it usually works out that public servants are answerable to nobody.

It's argued that our public servants sound out the views of the people before bestowing public policies on them, and that Ottawa responds to petitions for remedies. Some persons consider these devices -- the hearing and the petition -- to be equivalent to democracy. They are not the same thing, and they are not as good.

Opinion sounding is no authentic expression of public will; too many interests intervene between the expression of views and the formulation of a policy based upon it. Nor are opinions sounded out for every policy affecting the people and the Territories -- particularly not for policies in which the authorities have a vested interest. Also, many persons are afraid to be frank, knowing they are vulnerable. I am vulnerable myself.

As for the petition -- it is a fancy form of beggary.

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I do not envy the Carrothers Commission its job. They will have to untangle a snarl of conflicting claims amongst Outside authorities. They will have to locate and prescribe for the great voids of precedent and responsibility. And logic: the void in logic that insists that the Northerner behave like Outsiders want him to, regardless of the meagerness of his resources and the irreducible facts of Northern

conditions and Northern character.

But the most difficult task is to try to reverse the direction of power so that it derives unmistakably from the people -- all the people. As matters now stand, the direction of the flow of power is in flagrant contradiction to the principles of democracy.

Furthermore, the Carrothers commission will have to recommend devices by which the people of the Territories can eventually remedy some of the mistakes committed here by Outsiders. We cannot correct them all. But not only must we be able to correct those we can, we must also be guaranteed they will not happen again. We cannot assume these mistakes will simply disappear of their own accord.

I have searched for a decent term for one of these mistakes, and I apologize for my failure. The plain truth is that here in the M. W. T. we have a caste-system. The natives -- Indians, Eskimos, and most of those lumped in that peculiar limbo, White Status, bear the demoralizing indignities of our caste-system. This caste-system is just fuzzy enough around the edges that it needn't be seen by those who don't want to see it. But it's here, all right, and it has contributed a number of interesting words to the Canadian vocabulary.

Our caste-system is rooted in our history, the contribution of agents installed here to look after Outside interest, and who incidentally took charge of the inhabitants. Rarely did these Outside agents ever truly commit themselves to the Territories, its people and their land. Few even bothered to learn the people's languages. Their loyalties lay elsewhere. Besides, they had a blind faith in the superiority of their own culture in coping with conditions of the North. In this respect, about the only notable exception was a marvelously arrogant and brilliant explorer, Vilhjalmur Stefansson who, the native people agree, actually did some of the things he bragged about Outside -- and a few other things he never mentioned. But in the end his commitment was no more profound than most any other Outsider's.

Now entrenched, the caste-system is thoughtlessly perpetuated by the proliferation of public agencies, their policies and the attitudes of their agents. Buck-passing and irresponsibility are chronic. Rudeness is common, and so is scorn. Condescension is the rule. Outsiders still believe they know more about everything than natives or

settlers do. They meddle outrageously in people's private lives. Coddled as they are with a heavily subsidized Arctic-proof style of life Outsiders by and large regard the real people of the country as squatters and the settlers as non-persons.

The caste-system degrades us all. It suppresses thought and imagination, discourages initiative, destroys individualism and undermines willingness to take on responsibility. It creates an atmosphere of mistrust on all sides. It even overrules the obligations of friendship and neighborliness. It denies the many varieties of human nature and the validity of their expression.

It is also a dishonor to Canada.

Any Northerner, native, old-timer, new settler, deserves to feel at home anywhere in his homeland. In solitude or society, he is entitled to freedom and equality, beauty and peace. Poor or not, he has a right to self-respect, a right to a life of harmony and happiness. Wherever he is, whoever he is, he should be able to declare joyously -- and truthfully -- Hail Happy Land!

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I have some specific proposals for your consideration, as well as my answers to some questions the Carrothers Commission presented in Inuvik, August 22nd, 1965. Some suggestions may sound bold and expensive. But it's doubtful if a well-organized provisional government embodying such features as I've outlined would cost any more than the patch-upon-patch system financed for the Territories by the Federal government today. Certainly that system is a waste of material and human resources, and it is creating more expensive problems for the future than it is solving for the present.

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Division of the Territories

The Territories should be kept intact, and the name not changed unless by plebiscite. Northerners are more like each other than they are like Outsiders. They have much in common no matter how far apart they live. A proposal to give away sections of the Territories to various

Southern Provinces is preposterous, as well as suspect. What has the resident of Tuktoyaktuk in common with the resident of Cardston, Alberta?

Members of Parliament

There should be two Members of Parliament elected by the people of the Northwest Territories, a concession to the geographical size of the riding.

Territorial Capital

For economic reasons the provisional capital of N. W.T. should be Fort Smith, and a permanent capital should not be chosen except by plebiscite or by the Territorial Assembly. Meanwhile, Fort Smith should be looking for some other justification for its existence, e.g. manufacturing.

Territorial Government

1. The residence of the N. W. T. Commissioner and all Council Members should be in the N. W. T. Within five years the Commissioner should be elected by popular vote to insure his responsibility to the people of the N. W. T. For the time being he should be chosen by the Territorial Council.

2. The number of elected Councillors should be increased to at least 15 for the time being. There should be no appointed Councillors, but five non-voting advisors, including two persons of Eskimo or Indian origin, should be named to the Territorial government staff to give the Council benefit of technical advice. In addition, the Council should be served at present by at least two full-time research assistants.

3. Plans to re-organize the Territorial Council into a Territorial Assembly should be large enough to give all residents assurance of a direct and personal interest in Territorial affairs.

I recommend a minimum of two Assemblymen from each settlement or district of 500 persons, with proportionately larger representation from towns and municipalities. Where necessary, districts should be defined by the traditional range and relationships of the people.

There are many reasons for revamping the Council into a large popular Assembly: Such an Assembly would serve to unify the sprawling Territories where the people are out of reach of one another. A greater number of local leaders would have a chance to gain political experience on the Territorial level. More candidates would have the experience

of standing for election. With a minimum of two representatives from each community, the inexperienced Assemblymen would serve as moral support for each other as well as rivals in performance. The local voters would have a personal knowledge of persons who represent them and hence, would take a more lively and personal interest in Assembly actions. The large Assembly would necessarily include many natives, and their equality with other persons would thereby be emphasized. The large membership would allow for establishment of reasonable committees to study the various categories of legislation and aspects of Territorial Affairs.

Powers of the Territorial Assembly

The powers of the Territorial Assembly should be on the order of a Provisional Government. That is, certain basic, specific and irrevocable powers should be granted to the Council-Assembly at once, with other powers to be conceded to it on a schedule based on ability to handle the work. The Council should have the power to hire and fire its own legal advisor, which would be a long step toward self-determination. Also, once we are allowed to understand our own finances and revenues down to the last penny so we can make comparisons with the situation of other provinces, it may be that we can assume a self-government just short of provincehood.

Beginning now, the Commissioner, with the help of his Superintendent of Territorial Finances, should be responsible for presenting to the Council-Assembly for its approval or rejection a complete budget based on the true revenues of the Territories and operating grants from the Federal Government. The Council-Assembly should be empowered to order the Commissioner to negotiate with the Federal Government for such funds needed to carry out programs in the Territories under direction of Territorial Superintendents and as approved by the Council-Assembly its rightful powers.

Territorial Bill of Rights

One of the first tasks the Territorial Assembly should set for itself is the drafting of a bill of social and personal rights pertinent to conditions of the NWT. This should be written whether or not there are means to enforce it because it would provide a formalized ideal to

strive toward. Also, all Territorial and municipal legislation could be checked against its principles for protection of human rights.

The Federal Bill of Rights will not serve.

Territorial Officials

Certain resident Territorial offices should be created to replace the host of federal officials now controlling affairs in the Territories from Ottawa and Fort Smith. Naturally, some of the federal personnel will find a place in the Territorial civil service, others will find themselves obsolete or unhappy, still different personnel will have to be found for new positions -- and the inhabitants of the Territories who can fill the jobs should be searched out first.

It must be clear that these employees are working for the Territories, and they must be resident here, although the Federal Government will have to bear some of the costs -- through grants -- for some time. These employees should be urged to buy property in the Territories, and must be pressured to assume, rather than evade, the responsibilities of tax-payers.

The Territorial officials should be appointed by the Commissioner on approval by the Council-Assembly, and should report through the Commissioner to the Assembly. They may be called to account for themselves and their activities by the Council-Assembly at any time.

Superintendent of Territorial Finances, responsible for budgets, financing schemes, and public accounting of revenues and disbursements.

Superintendent of Education, directing curriculums, school facilities, personnel, scholarship programs, and the development of Territorial history, social studies, pre-school, adult education and literacy programs.

Superintendent of Industrial and Labor Relations to administer a Fair Employment Practices Code, Equal Opportunity programs, apprentice and on-the-job training programs in conjunction with the Superintendent of Education, and to negotiate, with the cooperation of the Superintendent of Lands and Resources, for labour contracts with Outside developers operating in the North. In cooperation with the Superintendent of Municipal and Community Affairs he should also develop industrial programs, including encouragement of small business and a business code of ethics.

Superintendent of Municipal and Community Affairs. One of his numerous tasks will be to revise the local government ordinances for approval by the Assembly. A further task will be to help communities find ways to short-cut costly planning schemes, to search out varieties of solutions to local problems and to encourage local councils to make their own decisions based on their studies of various solutions. He should be a red-tape artist in reverse of the usual official, helping communities to simplify their problems and make them manageable and fair.

Superintendent of Health and Welfare, whose office should deal with all residents without racial distinctions. In co-operation with other appropriate superintendents he should develop local projects to relieve unemployment, care for the aged and chronically ill. Pure foods ordinances will be his administrative responsibility, as well as hospital standards. But he must integrate his schemes for improved housing standards with those of other superintendents.

Superintendent of Justice, in charge of Territorial Police, a system of sheriffs, Training School for Justices of the Peace. One of his important responsibilities will be an Office of Public Defenders with a field staff recruited from among recent law graduates from Outside, assisted by a staff of high school graduates from the Territories. He should also develop crime prevention schemes with superintendents of Education, Lands and Resources, Commerce and Recreation, and Industrial and Labour Relations.

Superintendent of Lands and Resources to develop and administer lands and resources policies, to sit in council with the superintendents of Municipal and Community Affairs and of Justice to handle traditional rights problems of native-born residents, and to administer a code of ethics concerning land damage by Outside developers.

Superintendent of Commerce and Recreation to develop training and loan schemes encouraging small and large businesses within the Territories, including manufacturing of Territorial raw products within the Territories, development of the Tourist industry. He must also negotiate with Outside developers for privileged prices for products of the Territories sold within the Territories. He should work in co-operation with other superintendents as indicated elsewhere, but his main expertise should be in the economy of the Territories, and the interrelationships of its factors.

Superintendent of Transport to develop the aircraft, boating and barge, and highway transport industries in a system suitable and beneficial to the Territories, to develop and administer safety codes and systems, communications systems including television, and to be in charge of planning highway construction, in consultation with other superintendents.

The work of the Territorial Superintendents shall emphasize synthesis of Territorial problems and their solutions, rather than fracturing as has been the case under the Federal regime.

The RCMP have a fairly ^{Territorial Police} ~~honorable record~~ in the NWT. They were assigned a hard job and they did it. But the RCMP are human, and they are police. Police don't have the same place in a democracy as they do in a colony.

Today, little native boys want to grow up to be RCMP. They haven't a prayer of doing so, but this is the measure of respect in which the RCMP are still held, at least among the very young. Yet this reputation is losing ground. In some towns the RCMP are reduced to being traffic cops and slum patrollers. They are notoriously lenient with Outsiders who break the law, but natives complain of being jailed for drunkenness when they are not drunk, and of being abused, hounded or harrassed without cause. Each rotation of personnel causes disturbances in the community. Some communities suffer from over-policing. There are no competent lawyers handy to give people the advice they need to protect their rights. It is unlikely you will hear very specific facts and complaints, although examples are easy to find. As noted before, the people are vulnerable -- and they know it.

It is obvious to all that the RCMP have two policies -- one for dealing with natives, another for whites. It is less well known that this double policy is fundamental to the RCMP training system. In the North, the double standard extends to social life, and it only enhances the caste-system we could well do without.

Interestingly, our crime rate has jumped fast, as was reported to the June session of the Territorial Council. How revealing that our

first major Territorial building should be a penal institution.

Obviously we have a backlog of disillusionment and resentment. While we can trace much of the trouble to the mass education system forced on the NWT, despite the system's proven failure Outside, the police system is also accountable.

Along with self-government goes self-policing and self-enforcement. I urgently recommend that a way be found to make use of the RCMP's authority, prestige and facilities to recruit and train an unsegregated resident police force with specific police powers -- whether or not the Territories can pay the full shot. This can be done without destroying the proud and exclusive traditions of the RCMP itself.

For the time being this adjunctive police force, a responsibility of the Superintendent of Justice, would be backed up by the power of the RCMP, which should gradually be reduced in numbers. Eventually, the resident police force would provide the trained personnel needed for municipal and town police, as well as a Territorial force for keeping the peace beyond local purviews. Qualifications for recruits should be pertinent to the NWT, and not the same as Outside.

In this way -- and perhaps this is the only way -- the RCMP could write a grand climax to their history in the North. They would save their own sagging reputations here -- and they would help reform the caste-system to which they have contributed.

Local Self-Government

Each municipality, town, village or settlement should have its own wholly elected council, and these councils must be granted specific and irrevocable powers of some degree, whether or not they are tax-supported.

Tax-Supported Local Authority

The whole system of municipal categories, borrowed from Outside and widely regarded as obsolete in any case, should be overhauled, simplified and made relevant to conditions in the Territories. Tax systems designed for communities with an agricultural base should be thrown out entirely. New schemes of taxation will have to be created and written into law to distribute community costs fairly among residents in company and government created towns.

There must be defined a schedule of local powers based upon a community's ability to be self-supporting, and culminating in full municipal status.

Free Basic Local Authority

At the same time there must be defined a separate schedule of free and irrevocable local powers granted to the elected councils of every community. These powers must be flexible enough that communities may assume such responsibilities as they need and want, simply by passing by-laws. The people of Hay River, for instance, should not be in lockstep with the people of Coral Harbour; each community should have the right to develop at its own self-determined pace, without being retarded by poverty or pushed by authorities. Each community should be guaranteed power to control the activities of Outside interests and their agents within the community lands, whether by veto in community council or by appeal for assistance to Territorial officials.

Written guarantees of free basic local authority will be needed, and so will minimum funds to keep local councils operating.

Here are some areas in which free local authority might properly be found:

Schools. Local elected councils or elected school boards should have the right to approve or disapprove, according to their estimate of local conditions:

1. School hours and dates of sessions.
2. Establishment of separate schools, or integration of separate schools, or to conduct plebescites on the question.
3. Truancy regulations.
4. Age at which children are permitted to be transferred to residential schools outside the home community.

Local councils should also be empowered to review complaints and to demand immediate dismissals of unsatisfactory school personnel. They should also be empowered to act on other school matters affecting the community, including choice of fuel and the use of the school for community purposes, school discipline policy, and school curriculum policy.

Appointment of Justices of the Peace. These officials should be elected by the people or appointed by their elected council. The council should have a say in their dismissal. Training should be arranged for Justices of the Peace, and refresher courses should be conducted periodically, under direction of the Territorial Superintendent of Justice.

Welfare Distribution. Local councils or their duly authorized agents should have the power to recommend, approve or disapprove welfare payments in their community in order to avoid conflicts of bureaucratic policy with local and seasonal conditions, customs and ethics. Local councils should be empowered to negotiate with the Territorial Superintendent of Health and Welfare, etc., to use certain proportions of welfare allocations for job projects such as road building and community improvements.

Public Servants and Agents of Outside Interests. Also, councils should be empowered to investigate complaints about public servants and Outside agents in the community and to order their immediate dismissal from the community if they deem it necessary.

Curfews and Closing Hours. These are properly the business of a local council.

Other areas in which free authority should be found for local councils are: public health, traffic control, water-sewage-electric services, land use rights and royalties within town limits or within a community's traditional territory, local liquor regulations, penalties for misdemeanors, waterfront use and lot zoning, proclamation of holidays and public celebrations, voter qualifications for local elections, etc. Additional authority in these same areas should be defined in the schedule of tax-supported authority for local councils.

Despite the confusion and conflict of responsibilities which now exist in the NWT, an earnest effort must be made to place real power in the hands of all local elected councils. These must be free powers, those too valuable to be entrusted to anyone but the people themselves. In this way the individual, his neighborhood and his community can become the springs of energy refreshing and inspiring the nation. To say the "people are not ready" or that we "need more research" are stalling tactics leaving the federal government open to the charge that it is not ready -- because the exploitation of the Northwest Territories is

not yet complete.