

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
8TH ASSEMBLY, 67TH SESSION

TABLED DOCUMENT NO. 34-67

TABLED ON March 29, 1979

T.D# 34-67
Zakki Mar 27/79

Tuktoyaktuk,
March 23, 1979.

Mr. Hugh Faulkner, Minister,
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario.

Dear Sir:

We are a group of concerned Inuvaluit who have examined the COPE agreement in principle and find that we must oppose it.

Our main reasons for opposing are:

1. COPE is not a democratic organization. It does not use a nomination and secret ballot procedure and it does not hold open public discussion of issues, preferring instead to go to people's homes where any disagreement with the COPE party line is seen as a personal insult to the visiting COPE person.
2. The COPE agreement in principle would do away with our present system of local government, which we know works, and would replace it with an untried and undemocratic system.
3. The COPE agreement defines a future that is a radical change from the present and from what has gone before. It calls for a collective approach to ownership that is more in keeping with the system of communist Russia than with the traditions of Canada. We fear that the COPE system will produce dictatorship by a few, and continued manipulation of that few by outside advisors.

To expand on these points, we want a free and open society for our children and not one controlled by a dictatorial organization set up in response to government grants, directed by southern advisors, and dedicated to the overthrow of the system of local government that many people have worked over years and years to develop.

It is difficult for us to understand why the government seeks to condemn the Eskimo people of the Western Arctic to such an extreme form of socialism, while at the same time the government is trying to strengthen private enterprise in the South. We, too, have initiative; we, too, have ability; we do not want a society in which everything belongs to one organization and the individual is cut off from the chance to succeed through his own efforts. We Inuvaluit have a proud history of personal freedom. We do not want to lose that freedom to a dictatorship, even to a dictatorship by a supposedly native organization.

From our own tradition, and from the government structures brought to us by the Federal Government, we have learned to value representative democracy, and the secret ballot. We know that free and open elections produce good local government. It is working. Why then would the Federal Government abandon what has been accomplished? We have learned to operate local government in the same way that we have learned about private enterprise - with government assistance and encouragement. Why does the government now seek to reverse 100 years of policy and attempt to set up a socialist state in the North?

COPE has accused us of being "businessmen" and in a way that is true of each of us. Some are trappers, some work for wages, some operate small businesses. We are all businessmen in the sense that we try to provide for ourselves and maintain our dignity and independence by so doing. We do not want to give up that dignity and that independence to a corporation controlled by a Toronto lawyer, a CARC biologist, and a few well-meaning, but easily-lead people in Inuvik.

You may wonder why we have not said these things sooner. The answer, Mr. Minister, is simple. We did not believe that the government negotiators would be so blinded by their haste to get a settlement that they would not see the shape of the monster that was being created. If they saw the monster; they were criminal to proceed. If they did not see the monster; they were incompetent beyond belief.

Our Committee conducted a survey of the Western Arctic communities, at our own expense, to see what feelings people now have about the COPE claim. Our methods were COPE'S methods, except we recorded only votes of adults and did not try to make the numbers seem higher by counting children. The methods used were far from perfect, but our findings, obtained in the same way that COPE established its claim to represent the Inuvialuit; are as correct as COPE's. If our findings are suspect, so too is their claim.

Our findings show that a significant number of adult Eskimos: People do not want COPE to represent them any more, if they ever did at all.

In the past our people have told your Department that Cope does not represent us. On these occasions an executive assistant has come to Inuvik and asked COPE if they really do represent the people. COPE has said "yes" and the executive assistant has gone happily back to Ottawa. We must tell you

that we are frustrated by your Department's unwillingness to see anything that might delay your goal of a quick land claim settlement. We are appealing for justice and reason in the present situation so that our future and the future of our children will not be sacrificed to the political ambition of the Federal Government.

Louisa Kruken

Yours truly,

Signature	Job	Elected Office
Paul Peter	Prepper.	
J. Stern	univ. counsellor	Justice Minister
W. Mesogaleuk	Hamlet Councilor	Mayor
Georgia Jackson	Business woman	M. Capat Blanc CHUBBO CAPTAIN
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W. Comperton	Tan. Kimpson	Emmanuel Kelly
Henry Stern	Doug Kruken	
Shirley Stern	Miss Lucas	
Frank Stern	Henry Kruken	
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