

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
9<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY, 8<sup>TH</sup> SESSION**

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URGENT PLEASE FORWARD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

DATE: MAY 19, 1982

TO: HON JOHN PARKER  
COMMISSIONER  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NWT

FROM: BOB STEVENSON  
PRESIDENT  
METIS ASSOCIATION OF THE NWT

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MAISO

DEAR MR PARKER:

I WOULD BE VERY GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD READ THIS OUT  
TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AT A CONVENIENT MOMENT  
DURING THIS SESSION.

ON BEHALF OF THE METIS PEOPLE OF THE MACKENZIE VALLEY,  
I WISH TO EXPRESS MY STRONG CONCERN ABOUT THE REPORT OF  
THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE MANNER IN  
WHICH IT IS BEING HANDLED. IT SEEMS THAT THERE HAS BEEN  
NO DECISION AS TO HOW TO DISCUSS THE REPORT IN AN ORGANIZED  
FASHION. THE STATUS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE, THE STATE  
OF ANY DRAFT LEGISLATION AND THE GENERAL PROCESS OF DEALING  
WITH THE MATTER ARE UNCLEAR.

THE METIS ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS IN PRINCIPLE MANY OF THE  
IDEAS PUT FORWARD IN THE INTERIM AND FINAL REPORTS OF  
THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE. CONCERNS WITH THE DROP OUT RATE,  
INADEQUATE ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND COMMUNITY  
CONTROL HAVE BEEN HIGH ON OUR LIST OF PRIORITIES.

HOWEVER WHILE THE COMMITTEE HAS BEEN INNOVATIVE AND  
IMAGINATIVE IN PRESENTING THESE IDEAS, IT OFFERS VERY LITTLE  
IN THE WAY OF CONCRETE OR PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS. HOW  
WILL SUCH NEW SYSTEMS BE IMPLEMENTED AND MADE FUNCTIONAL?  
HOW WILL THE NECESSARY DECISIONS BE MADE? HOW WILL IT  
ALL BE FINANCED?

FURTHER THERE ARE AREAS NOTICEABLY MISSING FROM THE COMMITTEE'S FINAL REPORT. THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO DISCUSSION OF HOW STANDARDS ARE TO BE ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINED. OUR CHILDREN MUST NOT BE SHORT CHANGED BY INADEQUATE GRADE LEVELS AND PROBLEMS WITH PORTABILITY OF STANDARDS. THIS APPLIES TO THE SCHOOLS, THE ARCTIC COLLEGE AND THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS. MUCH OF THE FUTURE OF THE NORTH IS AFFECTED AND DICTATED BY ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FACTORS IN SOUTHERN CANADA AND ELSEWHERE. A SYSTEM WHICH PREPARES YOUNG PEOPLE ONLY FOR LIFE IN THEIR HOME COMMUNITY IS A CRIPPLING HANDICAP IN A WORLD FULL OF TOUGH DECISIONS AND CHOICES. THE METIS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PART OF SEVERAL CULTURES AND WE HAVE GROWN STRONG THROUGH THAT. LET US NOT ISOLATE OURSELVES NOW BY BURYING OUR COLLECTIVE HEADS IN THE RIVERBANK.

THERE IS ALSO VERY LITTLE DISCUSSION ON WHAT THE GOALS OF EDUCATION ARE. EDUCATION IS NOT ONLY TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT OR A WAY OF REINFORCING CULTURES. WE FEEL VERY STRONGLY THAT EDUCATION - BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL, FOR BOTH CHILDREN AND ADULTS - MUST PREPARE PEOPLE FOR LIFE. IT MUST ENABLE THEM TO DEFINE AND SOLVE PROBLEMS AND MAKE CHOICES OF ALL KINDS - INTELLECTUAL, ECONOMIC, PERSONAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL. THIS IS A VERY SERIOUS BUSINESS. AS THE COMMITTEE NOTED IN ITS INTERIM REPORT A SYSTEM WHICH HAS NOT DEFINED ITS GOALS IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PEOPLE IT SERVES WILL NOT BE MUCH OF AN IMPROVEMENT. THERE IS MUCH WORK LEFT TO BE DONE IN THIS AREA BEFORE WE START INSTALLING BRAND NEW STRUCTURES.

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE ONE FINAL POINT CONCERNING LANGUAGE. WE RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE AND OF THE ORAL TRADITION IN MAINTAINING AND STRENGTHENING THE NATIVE CULTURES. WE STRONGLY DEFEND THE RIGHT OF PARENTS TO HAVE THEIR CHILDREN EDUCATED IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE HOME. HOWEVER WE AND ALSO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ARE LEFT IN SOMEWHAT OF A DILEMMA. MOST METIS PEOPLE USE ENGLISH AS THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE AND WISH TO SEE THEIR CHILDREN EDUCATED IN ENGLISH. THIS IS A CRUCIAL CONCERN AND THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE DISCUSSION OF HOW IT IS TO BE DEALT WITH. IT IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE COMMITTEE TO SIMPLY SAY 'LET THE COMMUNITIES DECIDE', HOW, AND BY WHOM, WILL THAT BE DONE?

WE HAD HOPED THAT THE REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE WOULD GENERATE LIVELY AND INFORMED DISCUSSION BY THE PUBLIC AND ON THE FLOOR OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. HOWEVER, THE REPORT HAS ONLY VERY RECENTLY BEEN AVAILABLE TO INTERESTED PEOPLE, AND THERE HAS BEEN NO ORGANIZED, PUBLIC PROCESS FOR GATHERING THE CONCERNS OF LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES AND OTHER CONCERNED GROUPS. THE DISCUSSION IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SEEMS TO HAVE REACHED SOMEWHAT OF AN IMPASSE.

I STRONGLY URGE YOU, MR COMMISSIONER, AND THE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, TO SLOW DOWN A LITTLE AND TREAD CAREFULLY. THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF OUR CHILDREN, AND THROUGH THEM THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN, AND THROUGH THEM THE FUTURE OF OUR HOMELAND, IS FAR TOO IMPORTANT TO BE HURRIEDLY DISCUSSED. WE HAVE LIVED WITH AN INADEQUATE EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR THIS LONG, LET US NOT RUSH HEADLONG INTO A NEW ONE WITHOUT TAKING THE NECESSARY STEPS TO ENSURE THAT IT IS AN IMPROVEMENT, AND THAT IT WILL TRULY ENCOURAGE THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PEOPLE IT MUST SERVE.

THE METIS ASSOCIATION WOULD WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY OF WORKING WITH THE APPROPRIATE BODY IN CARRYING OUT THE HARD, PRACTICAL WORK WHICH LIES AHEAD IF WE ARE TO SEE THIS BECOME A REALITY.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION.

YOURS SINCERELY

BOB STEVENSON  
R/PRESIDENT  
METIS ASSOCIATION OF THE NWT

CC ALL METIS LOCALS  
ALL NLA'S

M A NWT YK

CORRECTIONS: PARAGRAPH 3 SHOULD READ :  
THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF OUR CHILDREN,  
AND THROUGH THEM THE FUTURE OF OUR HOMELAND,  
IS FAR TOO IMPORTANT TO BE HURRIEDLY DISCUSSED.

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