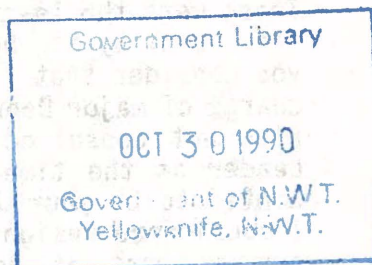




October 22, 1990

**THE HONOURABLE DENNIS PATTERSON, M.L.A.,
GOVERNMENT LEADER.**



I am very upset and angry with you on hearing that you deliberately gave me minor portfolios to force me out of Cabinet. This has been told to me recently by one of your Cabinet colleagues. I was always suspicious that you had these motives but now that I have the evidence and I know for sure, I can deal with it.

When after the last Territorial election we were all chosen by the Caucus of MLAs to be on the Executive Council, I was pleased and had hopes that we could have a cordial and fruitful relationship. The fact that I had lost to you in the leadership race for the Government Leader position did not affect my willingness to work co-operatively with you.

I was pleased again when you supported me for the Deputy Government Leader position on Cabinet and we had discussions of how we would work together in sharing responsibilities. You will recall approximately two weeks after our appointments we met to discuss portfolio assignments and we concluded that you would continue the dialogue and consult me prior to making portfolio assignments.

However, that was the last gesture of co-operation and thereafter you no longer consulted me and your attitude and relations with me deteriorated. The atmosphere on the 6th floor of the Laing during this period was often very tense and the floor was rife with gossip that even while I was performing my duties as Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, it was known Gordon Wray would be getting that portfolio.

I began hearing rumours and was told by one Minister that he overheard a colleague say 'Give Nick crummy departments and he'll leave'. Despite these very negative vibes and persistent rumours, I carried on my duties during the winter session and generally did the best I could.

When in March, 1988 you shuffled the Cabinet, I was shocked to find that you had decided to give me the N.W.T. Housing Corporation and Government Services. These were the least significant of all Departments; they had been handled to this point by Stephen Kakfwi, who was a new and inexperienced Minister. When you consider that I had been the Government Leader and had previously been in charge of major Departments, it was a real demotion and a 'put down'. You had also not consulted me whatsoever even though I was the Deputy Government Leader at the time. You will recall that I advised you that I no longer wanted to be your Deputy since you obviously did not have confidence in me; I considered resigning as Minister. After some thought I decided to stay and try my best at performing my duties. I was, however, humiliated and distraught at your handling of the matter.

In the ensuing months, I did my best to do my job; however, I increasingly realized that I did not enjoy being in charge of Departments which were administrative in nature and though the Housing Corporation was interesting, it wasn't enough to keep me on Cabinet. In the eyes of my colleagues in Cabinet I was rendered to the bottom of the Cabinet totem pole. I felt I had no alternative but to leave; I was discouraged and considering all that I had gone through since joining your Cabinet I felt it best to simply leave rather than fight and cause disruptions. It's interesting that when I submitted my resignation to you, you did not inquire as to the reasons or attempt in any way to get me to change my mind. In fact, you advanced the date of my departure!

Throughout my time in your Cabinet I did not feel welcome; there was no congeniality and certainly I was not in the close circle of friends or colleagues that you surrounded yourself with. You did not treat everyone equally.

On hindsight I can surmise a thousand reasons why things didn't work out between us, why I was treated in the manner that I was.

I don't know why I got in your bad books as it were, whether it was because of simple jealousy since I had beaten you once before or whether because of immaturity on your part in not being able to get above 'friendship' and your desire to reward those Ministers who had supported you in the leadership race.

I don't know that politically we differed greatly since we had often been on the same sides of issues when we were both MLAs, then in Cabinet as Ministers. When I was Government Leader I believe I treated you fairly and we were able to work together co-operatively.



I do believe you and some of your colleagues thought I was 'politically expendable' since in demoting me you were promoting Stephen Kakfwi, who was an Aboriginal person. With me leaving there would still be two other Dene and Metis on Cabinet. I consider myself to be a strong and determined Aboriginal leader and was that a threat to you and other non-native persons who occupy important government positions?

I have had some time to consider the matter and I think that one must not be overly negative, vindictive or dwell on the bad experience. One must go forth, even though one has been wronged, go on to find positiveness in life and the world. I feel fortunate to have had the strength and determination to take this approach to life. With the support of my family and friends I have been able to improve my family life and improve both my personal and spiritual state.

While we cannot undo the past, I would appreciate a public admission on your part and an apology for the wrong you have done to me. It was not just an affront to me, but in a sense, an affront to the Legislative Assembly who placed their trust in you and expected that you would work co-operatively with all who were chosen to be in Cabinet.

I am prepared to talk with you about this issue in the hopes that we can 'get along' and go forth and continue making worthwhile contributions to the people of the North.

Nick Sibbeston, M.L.A.,
Nahendeh.