

The Making of Eskimo Policy in Canada, 1952-62: The Life and Times of the Eskimo Affairs Committee

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ABSTRACT. During the 1950s, a decade of socio-economic turbulence in the arctic area of Canada, the Eskimo Affairs Committee played a significant role in shaping a new set of policy initiatives that Ottawa was framing toward Eskimos. In bringing together representatives of the major arctic field organizations, both public and private, the committee served as a corporatist device for overcoming the limitations of a colonial and underdeveloped state. The members gained a formal avenue of consultation, and a limited power of veto, over the new policy initiatives being framed by the Department of Northern Affairs. The northern administration gained a source of intelligence from several well-established arctic organizations, at a time when the department's own field presence was still embryonic. The committee considered a variety of issues, including the commercial relations of Eskimo trapping, the case for a new field administration, proposals for expanded credit channels and measures to extend the scope of wage employment and small manufacturing. Ultimately it was the need for more conventional channels of popular representation, along with the enlarged capacities of the northern administration, that led to the committee's demise. Nevertheless, the record of the committee's activities offers an unusual reflection of a development administration in the making.

Key words: administration, economic policy, Canadian Eskimo affairs, politics

RÉSUMÉ. Au cours des années cinquante, qui furent une décennie d'agitation socio-économique dans la partie arctique du Canada, le comité des affaires esquimaudes a joué un rôle prépondérant dans l'élaboration de nouvelles politiques qu'Ottawa destinait aux Esquimaux. En regroupant des représentants des grands organismes à la fois publics et privés œuvrant dans l'Arctique, le comité servait de mécanisme corporatif pour surmonter les limitations d'un état colonisé et sous-développé. Ses membres gagnèrent une voie légale pour se faire entendre et un pouvoir de veto limité sur les nouvelles politiques que le ministère du Nord canadien était en train de créer. L'administration nordique gagna une source d'information constituée par diverses organisations bien établies dans la région arctique, à un moment où la présence même du ministère dans la région n'en était encore qu'à l'état embryonnaire. Le comité examina des questions d'ordres divers, comprenant les relations commerciales de la trappe esquimaude, la pertinence d'une administration locale, des propositions pour faciliter le crédit et des mesures visant à accroître le champ des emplois salariés et de la fabrication à petite échelle. À la fin, ce fut le besoin d'obtenir des voies de représentation populaire plus conventionnelles, joint à des capacités accrues de l'administration du grand Nord, qui menèrent à la disparition du comité. Il n'en reste pas moins que le registre des activités du comité offre un reflet inhabituel d'une administration dans son processus de création.

Mots clés: administration, politique économique, affaires esquimaudes du Canada, politique

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INTRODUCTION

In the North, as elsewhere, studies of state institutions are an integral part of the analysis of social change. Several works have begun the task of charting the institutional and organizational contours of the northern state (Flanagan, 1958; Woodley, 1965; Government of the Northwest Territories, 1978). Often, however, a focus on the big picture, and the largest organizational units, proves limiting. The magnitude of the documentary task results in many such studies being exhaustively descriptive but disappointingly short on analysis. Another potential pitfall of administrative histories, whatever their focus, is that they may isolate the organizational dynamics — the inner workings of structures where state personnel claim centre stage — from the wider set of social and political forces in which all formal agencies are immersed. Not surprisingly, then, some of the most insightful studies of state units in the North have come where a concrete structure can be contextually situated, such as arctic gas pipeline planning (Dosman, 1975), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Morrison, 1985), the land use planning system (Usher and Beakhus, 1973) or the Geological Survey of Canada (Zaslow, 1975). Another rewarding approach begins not with an agency but with an issue and clientele, such as Dene treaty negotiations (Fumoleau, 1975) or Eskimo administration (Jenness, 1964).

This article will examine one rather modest component of the northern state, which operated in the critical decade of the 1950s. This was the period in which the national government

identified the northern territories as an object of policy meriting systematic attention. With the deepening of Cold War tensions, the region assumed greater strategic and defence significance. This brought renewed concern for the confirmation of Canadian sovereignty. At the same time, social forces within the North generated changes that also called for a state response. The economic pressures within the native hunting and trapping economy inflicted considerable hardship on the majority of residents. Still, the industrial interests of southern Canada were advancing on the North in a way that obliged the state to assume new regulatory and promotional roles. Yet, as it responded, Ottawa faced a complicated field of administrative jurisdictions, ecologies and social structures scattered across the largest land mass in the nation.

For ten years, 1952-62, the Eskimo Affairs Committee (EAC) served as a special mechanism to deal with some major public policy issues affecting the barrenlands of the Northwest Territories (N.W.T.). During this time the economic future of the Eskimo people was subject to extensive review. The "traditional" wildlife harvesting economy was judged to be in decline, and new structures were sought to replace it. In addition, elements of the post-war welfare state were belatedly reaching the northland, provoking an extended debate on their prospective impact. Throughout this time the state faced the task of establishing an administrative field presence sufficient for its new responsibilities. It was thus questions of state intervention in economic structure, as well as social, educational and health

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services, that dominated the northern policy agenda during this decade. The Eskimo Affairs Committee contributed to this process in several respects. At a time when formal channels between Ottawa and indigenous arctic interests were virtually non-existent, the committee provided a link. In differing degrees it offered a forum for representation (albeit circumscribed), coordination, consultation and legitimation.

Certainly the northern state had not lacked for coordinative and decision-making mechanisms. Within the bureaucracy, inter-departmental bodies have long operated at senior and intermediate levels. Prior to 1951, the Northwest Territories Council, by virtue of its membership, functioned as a senior coordinating committee. From 1948, the Advisory Committee on Northern Development (ACND) widened the range of bureaucratic players, even if it failed to match the working calibre of the council. At intermediate levels, a number of committees handled more specialized issues. For example, the Advisory Board on Wildlife Protection, created in 1916, advised the council and the federal cabinet on policy and legislative changes for half a century.

When it came to representation, however, the strongly colonial character of post-war northern politics was illustrated in the lack of avenues for popular input and control. For the N.W.T., electoral politics only began in a most rudimentary form after the Second World War. Even here, the single federal constituency and four Territorial Council seats were confined to the Mackenzie District south of the tree line. It was not until 1966 that any Territorial representatives could be chosen by Eskimos from the Arctic. In part because of this, the legitimacy of northern policy has often been problematic. While consultation with Euro-Canadian organizations was no substitute for the process of popular representation, it offered a way to lessen the resistance by the organized interests that preceded the northern administration into the field. This concern with organizational as opposed to popular legitimation is an apt reflection of the administrative colonialism then prevalent in the North.

PARAMETERS OF ESKIMO ADMINISTRATION

In law and in administration, the status of the Eskimo people changed continually through the early twentieth century. Initially Ottawa acknowledged jurisdiction over territorial Eskimos alone. While very little was known of conditions among these people, formal responsibility for them was assigned first to the Department of Indian Affairs and in 1927 transferred to the Department of Interior. Then a lingering dispute between Ottawa and the Province of Quebec (over the financial obligation for Eskimo relief in arctic Quebec) led the Supreme Court to rule in 1939 that all Canadian Eskimos were a federal responsibility under the Indian Act. Once again this opened the question of how Eskimo affairs should be administered. Both the Indian Affairs Branch (IAB) and the Northern Administration offices were candidates for the job.

After World War II, the prospect of recombining the Eskimo and Indian programs under the IAB was considered. For its part, the Northern Administration argued forcefully that "there should be a uniform policy for all Eskimos in regard to education, welfare and economic problems accompanied by an integrated development of the whole Eskimo group" (PAC 22/253c). In 1950 this responsibility was awarded to the Northern Administration Branch. The choice of a new administrative apparatus, unencumbered by a century of precedents in Indian administra-

tion, was to have significant consequences for future policy. It encouraged a focus on specifically arctic conditions. The designated centre for this new mandate was the Department of Resources and Development (DRD), which was renamed the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources (DNANR) in 1953. Particularly important here was the Arctic Services Section, which held responsibility for the barrenlands. Initially this consisted of a small headquarters unit with no field staff. Officers travelled north with the annual supply boats or relied on the RCMP detachments for advice and support. Over the decade discussed here, the arctic administration evolved into a separate field service that, while not exhaustive of the northern state, emerged as its lead element in dealing with Eskimo affairs.

While northern matters in general drew greater attention in Ottawa after 1945, several factors highlighted conditions among the Eskimos. The fur market slid into decline in the late 1940s, bringing severe pressure to bear on native hunter-trappers. At the same time, the new post-war social transfer programs of family allowances and old age pensions were extended to the North, injecting new cash streams into the native economy but also raising fears about the corrosive effects of the welfare state on a "simple" society. Beyond this, reports circulated of distress and starvation among certain Eskimo groups. These arose mainly in the isolated Keewatin interior, a combined result of the closure of local trading posts and of a failure in subsistence game supply.

Together these pressures triggered a policy review in the late 1940s. James Cantley, a former Hudson's Bay Company arctic trader, was engaged to assess the condition of the trapping economy. While he demonstrated the marked variation that prevailed across the region, Cantley showed the general effects of depressed fur prices. The commodity needs of Eskimos had to be met either through trapping returns or through social assistance transfers. The essential point was that the fur trade provided a declining proportion of Eskimo total income relative to transfers. Cantley warned that the "relief economy" had the potential to undermine life on the land, drawing Eskimos into permanent residence at the posts to subsist on whatever rations their social assistance would permit. He clearly demonstrated that no response to the fur market could be framed independently of the welfare issue. As a solution, Cantley proposed a close working relationship between Ottawa and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). Under Ottawa's policy supervision, the Company could manage each native's trading account to control his level of credit so as to avoid the accumulation of excessive credits or debts. Either in concert or in addition to social transfers, the fur price level could be stabilized in periods of falling markets, in order to reinforce the Eskimos' commitment to hunting and trapping as a commercially productive activity (Cantley, 1950).

With Cantley's report circulating internally, an alternative scheme was advanced in 1951 by the RCMP Commissioner L.H. Nicholson. Wary of relying on the Hudson's Bay Company as the core economic institution, he proposed instead a crown company to hold a trading monopoly. This concept had been advanced periodically in northern administrative circles since the 1920s, and it was clearly less popular in the Department of Resources and Development (which was close to the HBC) than was Cantley's scheme. The department decided to hold a meeting to consider this and other matters. Rather than restricting attendance to government agencies alone, the deputy minister, Hugh A. Young, also invited the Hudson's Bay Company and

the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, who controlled the largest (albeit "private") field organizations in the Arctic. Thus was born the Conference on Eskimo Affairs.

ORIGINS OF THE ESKIMO AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The initial conference agenda was extremely ambitious, underscoring the range of questions at stake in the northern field. It began by considering Cantley's analysis of the "new" Eskimo economy and the cumulative effects of government interventions. From here a number of responses were set out, ranging from the crown trading company, the creation of "Eskimo agents" in the field and price support for furs to Cantley's proposal for managing the trade in consort with the HBC. Finally, moving beyond the trapping field, a number of alternative questions were posed regarding Eskimo education, employment practices, housing, health and wildlife harvesting.

Not surprisingly, the May 1952 conference drew a strong attendance: 55 people, from ten federal agencies, the two churches and the Hudson's Bay Company. After several days' discussion, a concluding press release was issued suggesting that a cautious understanding had been reached. The participants were careful not to censure the policies then in place, but they did affirm the need to push forward: "present measures for the care and advancement of Eskimos were sound, but efforts should be unified and intensified wherever possible" (PAC 22/253a). But, at the same time, there was little consensus on the advisability of new economic initiatives. Thus for the time being, the Eskimos were to be encouraged to remain on the land and follow their traditional ways. It was felt, however, that the school curriculum could be "improved." From these cautious observations, a clutch of new policy initiatives would later spring.

At the initiative of senior officials in the Department of Resources and Development, a continuing consultative body was born. Its members were drawn from the upper echelons of the organizations, both public and private, most active in the North. The Eskimo Affairs Committee, as it came to be known, was chaired by the deputy minister of Resources and Development (later Northern Affairs and National Resources). It included the RCMP commissioner, the director of the Indian Health Service (Department of National Health and Welfare) and the head of the Arctic Section (DRD). Additional members were the Anglican Bishop of the Arctic (Rev. D.B. Marsh), the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Arctic (Rev. J. Trocellier) and the Fur Trade Manager for the Hudson's Bay Company (R.H. Chesshire).

Given the breadth and complexity of the conference topics, the choice of a continuing committee was understandable. It would take years to frame an appropriate response to such matters. The conference had admitted candidly that on the economic issues "No definite conclusions were reached on what could be done" (PAC 22/253b). In creating some follow-up machinery, the agencies most keenly affected by the agenda topics were invited to participate. With the mandate for both Eskimos and the territorial administration in general, the Department of Resources and Development was the sponsoring agency. Since the future of the fur economy loomed large in any strategy, the HBC and the RCMP held central roles. Both emergency and preventative health care hinged on action by the Indian (later Northern) Health Service. Given that the latter had yet to operate on the barrens, the church mission stations and the police acted

as the first level of medical aid, with the former even operating several small hospitals. The missions also served, along with the police, as sub-agents for issuing welfare and other social transfers. In this capacity they authorized the credits on which the Eskimos drew at the Hudson's Bay posts. Finally, since education was viewed as a crucial lever for social adaptation, the churches were again front and centre. It was not yet clear just how the arctic school system would evolve. While the Arctic Section had placed its first six "welfare-teachers" into the field, the churches furnished the core of the instructional manpower and facilities in the Mackenzie District. They firmly intended to extend their reach into the Arctic and would not be displaced easily. In fact, a sub-committee on education was established at the outset to address just this question. Its membership mirrored the composition of the main committee. Chaired by James Wright (Head, Arctic Section, DRD), it included Father Laviolette (O.M.I.), Reverend H.G. Cook (Ang.), the Superintendent of Education (DRD) and a representative of the Indian Affairs Branch.

As the core committee, the Eskimo Affairs Committee (EAC) met twice yearly, in May and October. This schedule brought the members together at the beginning and at the close of the northern travel season, facilitating regular reports on field conditions. Each meeting began with briefings and policy proposals from the northern administration, then carried on to solicit members' views on the soundness, timing and fit of the various items. One participant remarked retrospectively that "to a considerable extent, the agendas have consisted of reports by the Department, which other agencies have then discussed" (PAC 22/335a). Agendas were circulated in advance, minutes were recorded and the deputy minister kept the ACND informed of the new initiatives vetted by the Eskimo Affairs Committee. Indeed, Hugh Young explained the role of the EAC in Eskimo policy formulation:

As a long term policy, emphasis was being placed on the provision of adequate education but in the meantime there were many short-term problems. He had set up a Committee on Eskimo Affairs . . . which had made valuable proposals for the solution of some of these problems. [PAC 22/254.]

In fact, the EAC may have played a more extensive, and more subtle, role than this implied. To begin with, the flow of information was decidedly two way. It was often difficult to say who was the consultant and who the consultee. Ottawa was still desperately short of accurate information on field conditions in the Arctic. At the same time, the federal officials in the Northern Administration Branch already held some definite ideas for future programs. What they needed was, first, the broad concurrence of committee members and, secondly, the support of the non-governmental agencies in the implementation of certain key measures. Both functions took on a particular importance given that their shared clientele, the Eskimo people, were not politically organized beyond the camp level and could not be effectively consulted during the preparatory work. At one point, consideration was given to establishing local committees in the North, whose membership would parallel, so far as circumstances allowed, the main Eskimo Affairs Committee. In the end it was decided that "the time is not yet opportune to set up local committees" (PAC 22/253d). Not until 1959 did any Eskimos participate in the meetings. Then officials of the Northern Affairs Branch invited four Eskimos to attend the committee's tenth meeting. Residents of Rankin Inlet, Fort Chimo and Aklavik, these Eskimos all held wage-earning jobs in the settle-

ments. While the department explained their selection "on the grounds of intelligence, assertiveness, and ability to express themselves clearly," certain committee members lamented the absence of at least one hunter-trapper (PAC 22/335b). In any event, no one claimed that these delegates were in any sense representative. Nor could the Northwest Territories Council make this claim on its own behalf. While it was constitutionally entitled to legislate for the entire territory, the councillors focused their attention on matters affecting the Mackenzie District. Despite the absence of substantive Eskimo input, a committee consensus on specific policy measures could serve to legitimize some very dramatic plans for social change, while the fact of prior consultation could reduce the prospects for institutional resistance in the field. In short, the committee offered a useful device in the formative stages of Ottawa's developmental efforts on the barrens.

THE COMMITTEE IN ACTION

Just how these subtle and complex patterns of influence unfolded is best illustrated with concrete examples. With the education question hived off on its own, the main committee devoted most of its time to "improvements to the Eskimo economy." At the committee's inaugural meeting in the autumn of 1952, the administration presented several complementary initiatives for consideration. It was clear that the committee would not accept either the Hudson's Bay Company or a crown trading company as the fulcrum for economic policy. Nor was there a consensus on the advisability of social transfers *per se*. The administration had always been sensitive to the disruption such programs could bring. When family allowances and old age pensions were first introduced to the Arctic, the N.W.T. Council prepared special rules for their distribution, aimed principally at ensuring that the new purchasing power was expended on useful producer and consumer goods.

However, this did not prevent continuing controversy. At least one committee member harboured strong views on this question. In 1953 Bishop Marsh set out his views on the impact of social transfers. Lamenting "the socialization of the Eskimo," he argued that "government doles are ruining the morale and undermining the health of the Eskimo" (Time, 1953). During the winter of 1952-53, this issue attracted a brief and exaggerated notoriety in the North American press, in a highly ideological context. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that Eskimos were applying their social transfer credits to the purchase of esoteric goods such as phonographs and alarm clocks. Despite rebuttals from Ottawa, this image of the self-sufficient nomad losing his will for independent living was presented as a symptom of the demoralizing effect of the welfare state. Marsh lent his voice to this viewpoint. Despite such concerns by individual members, there is no evidence that the committee ever questioned the social transfer system as a whole. If this underlines the essentially reactive posture of the committee, it also shows, with the lapse of the Cantley proposals, how the committee exerted influence. For the time being, the broad issues of merchant relations and social transfers were set aside.

Instead, the Department of Northern Affairs generated a flurry of new proposals that aimed to encourage new economic activities for Eskimo people. An Eskimo Loan Fund was outlined. It was intended to provide Eskimos with capital over and above the short-term credit represented by the "trader's stake." Its immediate purpose was to fund producer goods such as boats,

traps and, later, skidoos to augment the trapping industry. At the same time the loans could be applied to alternative economic initiatives. One of these called for the promotion of small settlement-based enterprises in such areas as handicrafts, clothing and boat building. These could be sustained in single communities and could provide a cash income apart from trapping. Another measure addressed the problem of land-based Eskimos by proposing that select hunting and trapping groups be resettled from marginal lands to more promising but vacant territories. Still another plan called for the redirection of land-based Eskimos from trapping into wage employment in settlements. The Eskimo Loan Fund could provide capital in support of all of these, and its endorsement by the committee opened the way for launching many diversified initiatives.

One outlet *not* readily endorsed for Loan Fund support was Eskimo cooperatives. This question arose, and was resolved, in a revealing way. There were already doubts within the senior administrative ranks when, in 1954, the Development Section (NAB) raised the possibility of investigating cooperatives. Indeed, when an Eskimo group at Aklavik called for help in organizing a local co-op, the response was anything but positive. The NAB director surmised that the principle was poorly understood and was being forwarded simply as a means to reduce retail prices. Whether the question of cooperatives was ever put directly to the committee is unclear. However, committee thinking was cited by the administration in its efforts to downplay the Aklavik request. Interpreting the latter as a call for "the government [to] enter the trading field," the director replied that this question had been resolved at the policy level (PAC 22/298b). Senior branch officials harboured reservations about cooperative development on ideological grounds, viewing them as socialist experiments incompatible with the Ottawa government's outlook (B.G. Sivertz, pers. comm. 1983). The "project" approach to local enterprise, which the branch had devised and the committee had vetted, offered an alternative frame of reference by which the cooperative option could be deflected. Not until 1959 were cooperatives seriously considered again, at a time when social mobilization was accorded more importance. At this later point the Hudson's Bay Company led the opposition, mounting a sustained campaign to limit the spread of Eskimo cooperatives, which it feared as a potential source of commercial competition (Clancy, 1985).

A third issue arose out of the administrative implications of the new arctic development program and particularly the new field presence it presumed. The 1952 conference had resisted the creation of any new arctic field service (which may have conjured up images of a new Indian Affairs bureaucracy). While the new initiatives needed special logistical support, continued opposition within the committee caused the field staff question to be deferred for several years. Arctic Section personnel were assigned to the pilot projects, but the RCMP continued to serve as the general government field service for the time being.

Developments during the winter and spring of 1954 served to recast this question. The spectre of social hardship brought a sense of urgency, which dissolved the resistance. There was a rash of reports of food shortages, local destitution and even starvation among Eskimos at isolated posts. In several cases emergency airlifts were organized to deliver relief rations. In other cases, confusion arose subsequently over the degree of actual privation that had occurred. Either way, the administration's surveillance and reporting capacities were questioned. Moreover, the publicity attached to these reports brought censorious

editorial comment in the southern press as well as criticism from the parliamentary opposition. Apart from the charges of social neglect, the deficiencies of the patchwork field network were evident. The administration's response was to attach greater urgency to the alternative economic programs and to upgrade their staffing. At its fourth meeting in May 1954, the committee was briefed on the establishment of a new headquarters unit, the Arctic Division, which would handle all Eskimo programs except education and game. For the field, the new position of northern service officer (NSO) was announced, along with six initial postings. The Northern Administration sought to reassure committee members that

It is not intended that these men [NSOs] will take over the functions presently being performed by R. C. M. P. or others in the field, but rather that they will endeavour to co-ordinate the activities of all field organizations with a view to making the greatest possible use of all resources available and to improving the economy and living conditions among the Eskimos in the areas to which they are assigned. [PAC 22/298a.]

Under the circumstances, the committee could offer little by way of principled objection. On the economic issues, "it was generally agreed that satisfactory progress was being made in this direction and that the program being followed was meeting the immediate need and could be expanded gradually as needs arise and required information becomes available" (PAC 22/298a).

The pace of administrative change continued to quicken in March 1955, when the Northern Affairs minister, Jean Lesage, announced the results of the educational policy deliberations. The new policy involved "an extensive program of construction of schools and hostels to provide better education for children in the N.W.T." (PAC 22/298d). The educational issue was one of the most complicated of those faced by Ottawa in the 1950s, in large part because of the entrenched church interests and the need to break with longstanding arrangements. Here developments in the Arctic were tied to negotiations in the Mackenzie District, and Lesage's announcement marked the culmination of a decade of manoeuvring. The government established a single integrated system of day and residential schools across the N.W.T. (Carney, 1971). Over a six-year period, Ottawa proposed to build, fund and operate the schools, while also funding residential hostels that would be run by the churches. In the arctic region, this represented practically an entire new program, with the schools actively contributing to the migration of Eskimos to settlements.

The middle years saw a shift in focus in committee deliberations. The program outlined after 1952 embraced a multiplicity of small projects, whose general impact depended on their cumulative success and steady extension. For instance, several small groups of a dozen families or fewer had been relocated to new hunting and trapping territories by 1954 at Resolution, Craig Harbour, Banks Island and other locations. Similarly, on the wage employment front, groups of Eskimo men were sent to Churchill and Frobisher Bay to learn maintenance skills, while others were placed at mines in the Ungava and at Rankin Inlet. The local manufacturing projects were similarly diverse: boat building and repair at Lake Harbour and Tuktoyaktuk, art at Cape Dorset and small stores at Craig and Herschel Island.

While this thrust continued, and accelerated after 1959, the situation at mid-decade opened a new set of possibilities. The advent of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line defence installations, along with the nickel mine being developed at Rankin Inlet, held out the prospect of absorbing not handfuls but

hundreds of Eskimo workers. While not unconcerned about the social impact of such developments, the Department of Northern Affairs also recognized the economic possibilities they brought and their obvious fit with a second economic strategy (Lesage, 1955). The Canada-U.S. treaty on the DEW line included rules governing the use of local labour. Furthermore, one of the most important early assignments for the NSOs, other than organizing training projects, was in DEW line liaison. Not only were they to screen applicants for employment, but the NSOs were also instructed to monitor wage and work conditions (\$1.25 per hour for unskilled jobs; parity with white workers on skilled jobs) (PAC 22/298e). The committee had considered the prospect of setting a uniform wage rate for all Eskimo labour. This would either have forced the older northern agencies up to DEW line standards or allowed the defence contractors to pay their Eskimo employees a lower wage, reflecting the northern average. In the end, the committee concluded that the uniform wage was not practicable.

At its peak, the DEW line employed 250 Eskimos. This period was brief but intense. With construction all but complete by late 1957, about 100 Eskimos retained permanent positions. The timely opening of the North Rankin Nickel Mine in 1957 served to sustain the drive for training and wage employment. During its operating years (1958-63), the mine employed about 80 Eskimo workers on average (Williamson, 1974). To bridge the skills gap, training of various types was now offered at Frobisher Bay and Churchill, as well as at the Leduc Vocational Training Centre in Alberta. These matters increasingly occupied the committee's agenda in the late 1950s.

Given such wide-ranging state initiatives, the function of the Eskimo Affairs Committee began to change. Increasingly it was presented with detailed reports about projects whose underlying rationale lay beyond debate. Social and economic pressures originating in the North had forced Ottawa to act according to a timetable and on a scale not unanimously supported at the committee level. For example, RCMP Commissioner Nicholson had grown increasingly apprehensive about the plans for social change. He outlined these concerns publicly in an article in *The Beaver* (Nicholson, 1959). Nicholson also urged caution on his committee colleagues, though senior northern officials saw this as an effort "to insulate the Eskimos to a degree that we think is not realistic or in the long run advantageous" (PAC 22/298f).

Not all of the northern officials were comfortable with the fast pace of action. In a 1955 memorandum, James Cantley, the secretary to the EAC, questioned the efficacy and even the legitimacy of the expanded state role: "Once the break from the traditional ways has been made, there can be no turning back. . . . How will [the Eskimos] regard all these plans we are making on their behalf?" Turning specifically to the role of the EAC, he noted the difficulties facing a functionally defined administration in reaching even internal agreement on policy. To Cantley, the EAC had not fulfilled its mandate as a coordinator. On the contrary, "each faction sees to its own interests" (PAC 22/298c).

Not surprisingly, the committee played a diminished role in the latter half of its life. After May 1955, meetings were trimmed to once yearly, in the spring. The motors of social change had shifted from the old institutional orders to new ones. Corporate capital and public finance began to overshadow the merchant traders and missions, forcing the latter increasingly into rear-guard skirmishes to protect their continuing prerogatives. New consultative structures, such as the triennial Northern Resource

Conferences inaugurated by the Department of Northern Affairs in 1957, offered channels for industrial resource firms to advise on policy. Even in the field, the outline of new local authorities could be discerned. By 1959 there were more than 20 northern service officers spread through communities in the Arctic. A sign of the administrative evolution of the field force was the elimination of the NSO position (with its developmental overtones) and the designation of those personnel as "settlement managers."

THE COMMITTEE IN RETROSPECT

Over the years, the committee had a hand in many significant public policy questions. Yet to assess its unique impact as a decision-making body is more difficult. Strictly speaking, the minister was not bound by committee decisions, nor was he even obliged to take its views into account. Yet clearly there were advantages in according the committee some role as a consultative body. The Department of Northern Affairs was assuming the Eskimo mandate at a time of considerable social flux and possessed very little experience to guide it. Not only did the committee embrace the widest range of arctic field agencies, it also contributed in a *de facto*, if not *de jure*, manner to remedying the N.W.T. Council's obvious limits in handling matters north of the tree line. The committee emerged, at the initiative of the northern administration, in the absence of indigenous representative channels. Yet its role was clearly calculated. It was never intended to be broadly representative, but rather to enlist the advice of selected interests that had preceded the northern administration into the field.

It was constituted neither as an external advisory committee nor as an internal administrative working group. Instead, it was rather cautiously composed of a civil service majority and a non-governmental minority. The committee itself became a site for exchanging, adjusting and accommodating the concerns of its diverse constituents. The non-governmental organizations represented on the committee sometimes succeeded and sometimes failed in their efforts to shape policy outputs. On some issues the victory was temporary, as in delaying the creation of an arctic field service or the extension of Eskimo cooperatives. On other matters the impact was more permanent, as in rejecting the crown trading company. The negative or blocking character of many such efforts is quite revealing. Whether due to its diverse make-up or its essentially reactive posture, the committee was better able to register its opposition to specific initiatives than to formulate and promote positive programs.

It should not be assumed that the broad transition from the "old" agencies to the "new" necessarily reflected a zero sum conflict in which the old triumvirate was implacably opposed to change. In many respects, the resources of the missions, the police and the HBC were stretched desperately thin in the 1950s. They may have been unable to absorb any new responsibilities unless the expense was underwritten heavily by the state. So long as they seemed congruent with past practice, many elements of Ottawa's development program were quite welcome. For the Hudson's Bay Company, the new social transfers dramatically augmented native purchasing power. The only danger lay in the advent of retail cooperative competition, cutting into the flow of commerce. The police too were often ambivalent about their general administrative duties and expressed willingness to get back to their classical function. As the 1950s

ended, these political struggles intensified, but found channels outside the EAC process.

By the early 1960s the broader political agenda had reached a turning point that bore directly on the future of the committee. The time was approaching when the council would have to expand its membership to embrace the entire Northwest Territories. In 1960 Ottawa bought some time by deciding to fill the appointed positions on council not with federal officials but with private citizens with northern experience. Alternatively, the possibility of dividing the N.W.T. into separate Mackenzie and arctic jurisdictions was first suggested in 1961. This would permit the Mackenzie District to advance toward responsible government and economic maturity (in accord with its greater momentum), while the Arctic could be more slowly and intensively tutored by Ottawa (Bovey, 1966).

The annals of the Eskimo Affairs Committee illustrate how the logic of separate political development for the Arctic took hold during the 1950s. Politically and administratively, the differences between the Arctic and Mackenzie districts were much more compelling than their similarities. Thus a separate policy structure was required. While it differed in delegate composition, the committee nonetheless reflected the essential structure of the evolving N.W.T. Council. Both had been designed to bring together the key institutional orders with a stake in northern public policy. Just as the council began with a purely institutional membership, and later experimented with public representation by appointing persons with special knowledge of the North, so did the EAC during the 1950s. The three Eskimo appointees of 1959 can be viewed as an effort to prolong this phase. However, the modernization of the arctic administration, together with the appearance of rival consultative channels, rendered the Eskimo Affairs Committee increasingly marginal. In 1962 it ceased to operate.

The flow of influence between interest groups and states has recently been the subject of extensive theorization. Centring on the phenomenon of corporatism, elements of this literature may help explain the roots of the particular form of decision making traced here. Phillippe Schmitter proposes a distinction between "societal" and "state" forms. While this turns on a number of properties, it draws particular attention to the genealogy of organized interests. In the "societal" form, the groups exist prior to and independent of their inclusion in corporatist structures. Through their participation, the autonomous functioning units bestow legitimacy on the decisions taken in the name of the state, while gaining in return privileged access to the decision process. This is not so for the "state" variant, in which the organized interests essentially originate under state sponsorship in order to serve in the corporatist structure (Schmitter, 1974). To the extent that the EAC shares corporatist traits, it reflects the societal type.

K.J. Rea has suggested also that the post-war political system in the North has been essentially "corporatist" in character. For Rea,

the *structure* of the decision system under corporatism is distinguished by the existence of formally recognized bodies with different interests. . . . What is distinctive about the *processes* of corporative decision-making is that they involve bargaining among participants over preconceived policy alternatives. [Rea, 1976:152.]

The activities of the Eskimo Affairs Committee suggest that an element of corporatism prevailed in the Arctic of the 1950s. The question of how long it persisted, or whether the societal

form yielded to a more state-centred corporatism, cannot be addressed here. Indeed, care must be taken to avoid painting such a portrait too broadly. Certainly the EAC machinery conferred reciprocal benefits on most participants. However, it far from exhausted the political needs of its members. Moreover, the committee's procedural practices were firmly tilted to the advantage of the northern administration itself. At most the committee offered its members an opportunity to influence, rather than a delegation of power. At the same time, the committee helped to ease a major *political* as well as administrative transition. In this, it helps explain why a greater protest did not surface from organized northern interests during such a turbulent time. In many ways the life of the committee reflects its times in sharp focus.

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