

(March 31, 1988)

SYMPOSIUM INTERNATIONAL SUR
L'AVENIR DU NORD QUEBECOIS

Exposé de

MARK R. GORDON

(ENGLISH TRANSCRIPT)



PRESENTATION OF MR. MARK R. GORDON:

First, I would like to thank the organizers for giving us this opportunity to speak before so many people involved in the North. I haven't been here very long but I have noticed a great many people that I've had dealings with over the years, and hopefully will continue to have over the years to come.

I've been asked to speak on the multi-ethnic nature of development in the North.

As I was thinking about this topic I wondered from which point of view I should discuss it. As far as the Inuit are concerned, all the French and English from the South are ethnic minorities in the North, where they form only about 15% of the population.

In spite of its flaws, the James-Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement is a very important element of our development. It has touched many aspects of our lives in the North and it also gave us the means to participate in Western-style economy and Western society. It is a tool that has enabled us to work out many of the major arrangements now in force between ourselves and the Government.

Its impact has been tremendous on the Inuit, in terms of services, housing, health-care and control over the education system. It has tremendously improved the standard of living in our communities. To give an example of what it was like before the James-Bay Agreement, I'll cite some of my quite worn-out examples. Prior to the Agreement, the Inuit were allowed to have Municipal Councils with very limited authority. However, most of the decisions were taken by Government agents. Usually the decision was handed-down from the Government agents, and the Councils were more or less asked to figure out how to implement these decisions.

In Education, we had two systems in the Region, one Federal and one Provincial. Under the Federal system, we didn't even have a committee or an advisory committee to deal with our schools.

The Provincial Government was somewhat more democratic. They allowed us to have parents committees in each of our communities, but their authority was limited to two things: hiring and firing the janitor in the schools and hiring and firing the person that picked-up the kindergarten children in the morning and in the afternoon and took

them back home!

This caused a great deal of racial tensions in the Communities because people from the outside were making all the decisions, and Inuit had no choice but to follow them. Government agents decided who got jobs, welfare or housing. In fact they took away the internal power structure of these small societies in isolated Communities. They ran the show. And this created quite a bit of tension

So, advances have been made since the James-Bay Agreement . We now have control of our Communities, we run our own Municipalities, we have control of our Education system, although development is slower than we would like.

More work needs to be done in the area of curriculum development, to introduce more Native programs into the schools.

Nevertheless, the Inuit have more control of their Communities and services, outsiders do not have the kind of direct control over our lives that they used to have: many of the French and English people who now reside in Northern communities are our employees.

This being said, there are still some areas that need more work. There is potential for souring racial relations in our Communities, and these are some of the causes:

Most of the work that is done in the North, has now become more and more Unionized. In theory the Unions are supposed to protect the workers, to watch out for their rights; in practice, what Unions have meant in the North is to insure that White people get the jobs and the Natives don't.

I'll give you an example; I know a man who has worked as a carpenter for twenty-five years for the Quebec Government. But if I was to hire this man who has twenty-five years of experience and, in my view, is fully competent in his trade, he would have to, according to Union rules, pass an exam to be certified as a carpenter; however, he cannot write the exam in either French or English, he can only write in his own language, Inuktitut; since the exam is not given in Inuktitut, he cannot be certified as a carpenter.

Therefore if I hire him it is illegal for me to pay him the appropriate wage for his skill level. I am forced by regulations to pay him as a labourer, an unskilled labourer.

We should not be exempt from the benefits or the protections of these Institutions simply because we speak the "wrong" language.

There has been some movement forward in the Teachers Unions and the Hospitals, but it is only a beginning. There has been small progress.

Another problem is that many Union agreements provide special subsidies for people from the outside. We did a very brief study about three years ago comparing subsidy levels given to native people and to the non-natives. We found out that in some areas, particularly in the public sector, a native person and a non-native person with exactly the same qualifications could get basically the same wages but in most instances the native person would get a little bit less.

The real difference was that the non-native person who was brought in from the South, protected by the Union, would have much higher housing subsidies direct subsidy for food, cargo allowances, and paid trips for vacations to the South. When you put all this together and figure out how much it means in dollars, it turns out that they obtained as much as 150% more than the local person doing the same job. As a result, people who have the highest wages also have the least costs due to these subsidies.

Many of these predicaments are the main ingredients for revolutions in other countries, yet they are elements of the situation we are facing today.

I'm not a big fan of the Unions because of what little they have done in our area. If they really wanted to protect the workers, to guard the underdog, then they should be involving the native people. We should not be excluded because we speak the "wrong" language or because we are the "wrong" color. We should be entitled to the same benefits as non-natives who come up North.

As for the multi-ethnic nature of economic development, what happens is that private entrepreneurs in the communities cannot match the wages offered by Government Institutions and therefore cannot hire skilled workers, prefer taking lower level jobs with the Government because they can get a higher wage and all these

benefits. So private business is left with those who are least employable.

This also can , and will cause racial tensions if these issues are not resolved directly.

I wanted to bring out this problem because I think that there is a great number of people here who are not even aware of this discrepancy. They are not aware that their Government is subsidizing the wealthiest people to the highest degree and the poorest ones to the lesser degree.

If we are going to have good development in the North and if everybody is going to participate equitably in it, we will need some affirmative action programs to bring the native people up to a level of participation where they have the chance.

Many Government agencies think that what we want is a full-time babysitter; that's not it. We want to be even partners in business. Let me give you an example.

Hydro-Quebec needed aircrafts to operate in the region. Instead of tendering contracts for the two Native-owned airlines of the region to bid on, they gave the contract to Quebecair without tender.

When the Government Institutions take a look at developing Quebec expertise, they usually mean that they want to bring in somebody from the South to do the job no matter how ready we may be to take it on. We are not even given a chance to bid on the job.

We must be given the opportunities, or at least a fair shake at opportunities that are coming up. There are going to be more development projects in the North; there will be Hydro development and mineral development. If we are not even given a chance to bid on these contracts, we will never be able to participate as equal partners in this development and that is likely to affect race relations.

We need to feel that we have as much of a chance at a job as the guy that's coming in from the South. We have to feel that.

Since labor regulations have been applied in the North, many of the native people who used to have jobs in trades, such as plumbers, electricians, mechanics, etc., cannot be paid their full wages, because they have to be hired as unskilled

labourers. We asked the Government a few years back to change that rule so that specialized Inuit workers would have the chance to get in; at least the older workers who have been working in these trades for the past twenty years or more.

The young workers can go through the certification system and training schools. That's no problem. But what about the real leadership in our community that's being pushed aside?

The provider in our families was the Elders. They have no means to provide now. That's been taken away. Social unrest starts there because the providers in our society are not allowed to provide. They are not allowed to work at their trades. What has happened is that now it is their sons, their nephews, and their daughters who are getting the jobs, and not the providers, which is turning the power structure of the community inside out.

These are some of the implications of these rules which are drafted up in the South and are applied to the North without adjustments.

We asked before a Parliamentary Commission, that the Government change Union rules. They said they would be calling us back; they liked our presentation, we had the support of all the Parties that were at that Commission. The Human Rights Commission supported us also. The Unions supported our submission. We did not even get one call back on how to change those regulations, not one call. Everybody said "yes, this is a good cause, you're right, let's do something about it". But nothing has been done.

So there has been all this development in the North since the signing of the James-Bay Agreement. On infrastructure and Government services alone, the Inuit have acquired over one billion dollars in the last ten years. That is a lot of money, but only about 10% of that money stayed in the North. The rest went straight South.

We fought hard to obtain housing for the communities, but housing units were built by construction workers from the South while the local people remained unemployed.

We want the economic spin-offs from the development. We are not getting a fair share of that. We are prepared to try and work within the Governmental system. I think

we've demonstrated this very clearly in the past ten years. We've tried to play within the rules and we are prepared to continue to do that, but there are people back home that are extremely frustrated about the situation. And they often blame the James-Bay Agreement for this.

However, the James-Bay Agreement said nothing about Unions and regulations, because the Inuit were supposed to be getting priority on contracts, especially on those for goods and services that were to be for our benefit; for the benefit of our communities.

The Native people were supposed to get first crack at those jobs. These provisions have never been implemented. All these moneys being put up through the North, all this development is going on...all these jobs that are being created and we were forced to employ workers from the South and not even our own people.

This situation, if it's allowed to continue, will create great social unrest in our communities.

We've been quite involved in trying to develop our area on our own initiative. Makivik is only one institution among many. The Federation of Coops is also another institution that is involved in the developing of the area, and so is the Kativik Regional Council for development

Through their own avenues, all these institutions are trying to promote the development of the area.

Well Mr. Chairman, it appears that my time is up...so I would like to end by again thanking you for inviting me to attend your Conference, and hope that my presentation has shed some light on the important issues being discussed here today.

MEMORANDUM

To : Mark R.
From : John
Date : December 17, 1985

Re : Your interview - Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic

Mark,

Mark Genuist from CBC Radio in Québec City will call you at 7:30 in the morning wednesday December 18th, for a good morning coffee and the interview should start at 7:50 am.

The interview will be in general along these lines:

- The fact that Canada's claim to the Canadian Arctic is not recognized everywhere in the world.
- Land Claims being one way to strengthen Canadian sovereignty.

Questions:

- 1- Why is Canada's Claim to the Arctic a paper claim?
- 2- How would settling land claims help Canada with its international claim to the Arctic?
- 3- What can the Inuit do to protect Canada's claim to the Arctic?
 - Environmental aspect
 - Search & Rescue etc.
- 4- What do Inuit want?
 - Economic Development?
 - International Trade (Greenland?)
- 5- Are you afraid of Southern Canadians?
 - Exploration
 - Ice Breakers
 - Other major developments



John