

Friends of the Lubicon

Summer - Fall '00 Update

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Public Pressure Temporarily Prevents Social Assistance Cut-Off

Lubicons still under the gun unless feds honour 1980 agreement to fund social services *until land rights are settled.*

Efforts by supporters to convince the federal government to reverse its decision to cut off social assistance funding for Lubicon Nation members who live at Peerless and Trout Lakes appear to be having an effect.

The federal government has decided not to cut the funding temporarily pending further "review" of the Lubicon position on the issue.

Lubicon Nation however has been reminding the federal government that the repeated threats of federal funding withdrawal -- like the three such threats in the past six years -- are in unilateral contravention of a longstanding 1980 agreement made with then-Indian Affairs Minister John Munro regarding provision of social services to Lubicon members until the federal government

makes a commitment to honour the 1980 agreement to provide Lubicon people with essential social assistance until a Lubicon settlement can be achieved, efforts by supporters should intensify.

The Cut-Off & Suspension of Talks

For over three months, prior to the August 22 federal decision to temporarily continue funding, Federal Indian Affairs officials based in Alberta have been threatening to cut off federal social assistance funding for some twenty Lubicon families living outside the main Lubicon community of Little Buffalo starting this September.

The Alberta office of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has been telling the Lubicons that policy requires it to cut off social assistance funding for Lubicon members who live "off-reserve" - even though everyone knows the Lubicons still do not have a reserve to live "on" or "off". In order to receive subsistence social assistance needed to feed their children, Lubicon families living at nearby Trout and Peerless Lakes have in effect been told to either join another First Nation or go begging to the historically hostile Alberta provincial government.

Lubicon Chief Bernard Ominayak called the federal move another in a long and well-documented history of government attempts "to tear Lubicon society apart". As a result, on June 18th Lubicon Lake Indian Nation suspended

(.....see "Talks Suspended" .p. 2)

New Information Campaign Takes Off

Friends of the Lubicon, Outaouais Lubicon Solidarity, Amitie Lubicons-Quebec, Aboriginal Rights Coalition, and the National Union of Public & General Employees have announced plans to solicit support from constituents in Minister of Indian Affairs Robert Nault's home riding in an information campaign about Lubicon land rights.

The campaign kicked off on Saturday, August 26, 2000 with a full-page ad in the Kenora local paper, The Daily Miner and News. A scaled down version of the ad is shown here. (The unreadable text in the ad shown here is very similar to the text on the poster enclosed with this mailing.) We hope to reach more constituents with ads in other northern Ontario newspapers and by other means.

Each ad costs us over \$1,000. Any financial contributions you can spare to help

the Friends of the Lubicon cover the cost of the ads will be appreciated.

**Mr. Nault,
the Lubicon people
need a settlement.**

Don't let your constituents understand this.

The Lubicon people have been waiting for a settlement for over 20 years. They have been told that they must wait until the federal government has decided on a settlement. This is a lie. The Lubicon people have been waiting for a settlement for over 20 years. They have been told that they must wait until the federal government has decided on a settlement. This is a lie.



Photo of a Lubicon person, likely a member of the Lubicon Lake Indian Nation.

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Talks Suspended from p. 1

land rights' negotiations with the federal government until the federal government commits to honour the 1980 agreement to provide Lubicon people with essential social assistance irrespective of where they live pending settlement of Lubicon land rights.

Since that time, Lubicon Nation, Friends of the Lubicon, Hull-based Outaouais Lubicon Solidarity, and Montreal-based Amitie Lubicons-Quebec have been spearheading a call for supportive action.

Worldwide Pressure Builds

Labour, church, social justice, environmental, aboriginal rights and international human rights groups, representing hundreds of thousands of people, have responded with declarations of support for the Lubicon position and condemnation of the federal threat to sever social assistance.

Supporting groups include the Assembly of First Nations, Treaty Chiefs of Alberta, Canadian Labour Congress and five major Canadian unions, Presbyterian Church of Canada, Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers), the Mennonite Central Committee, the Aboriginal Rights Coalition, Austria-based Society for Threatened Peoples, Germany-based Action Group for Indian and Human Rights, David Suzuki Foundation & more.

On July 4, Peter Schwarzbauer, chairman of the Austrian human rights organization Society for Threatened Peoples wrote Nault saying its membership is "deeply disappointed and upset at the decision of the federal government" to breach the longstanding social services funding agreement with the Lubicon. He accused Canada of behaving like a "banana republic" in its historically abusive dealings with the

Lubicon people and urged Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to stop "government tricks and tactics" and get negotiations back on track.

On the July 5th weekend, at an assembly of the Treaty Chiefs of Alberta, Chiefs of Treaties Six, Seven and Eight unanimously endorsed a resolution calling on the federal Minister of Indian Affairs to honour the 1981 agreement with the Lubicon Lake Indian Nation to reimburse the Lubicons for social assistance provided to their members and to discipline senior INAC officials for "trying to tear Lubicon society apart."

On the July 12th weekend, the Chiefs at the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) 21st Annual General Assembly in Ottawa unanimously passed a similar resolution but going one step further. The AFN is calling on Minister Nault to remove senior federal officials in the Alberta regional office of INAC.

On July 12, Dionys Zink, board member with the Munich-based Action Group for Indian and Human Rights wrote Nault saying that federal plans seem designed "to sabotage the relationship between your federal government and the Lubicon Cree." Zink promised that members will let environmental and human rights organizations in more than 10 European countries know about the breakdown in negotiations and "will work towards a joint support effort of concerned individuals, (and) organizations to support the Lubicon Cree."

On July 21, Rev. Glen Davis, Moderator of the 126th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Canada wrote Nault "out of deep concern about an urgent matter that threatens the well-being and, indeed, the very existence of the Lubicon Nation." Davis urged Nault to return Lubicon funding to its 19-year-old status quo immediately.

On July 27th, Kenneth Georgetti, president of Canada's largest labour federation the Canadian Labour Congress, wrote the minister to voice his "strong concern". Georgetti said, "Your decision is arbitrary and seems mean-spirited and I am therefore urging you to reconsider ... (and) ... agree in writing to honour the longstanding (1981) agreement."

On Aug 9, renowned scientist, environmentalist, author and broadcaster David Suzuki, wrote to Nault expressing "dismay" at the "disgraceful" treatment of Lubicons and their land. Dr. Suzuki asked Nault to tell his regional office to stop the "harassment" of the Lubicon and to honour agreements already made.

On Aug 16, a joint press statement announced that in addition to the Canadian Labour Congress, five other major unions are urging Nault not to withdraw social services funding. The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), la Fédération autonome Collégiale (FAC), the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), and the Canadian Autoworkers (CAW) are supporting the Lubicon's position.

PSAC National President Nycole Turmel called the federal threat "an outrageous abuse of power." CAW President Buzz Hargrove said it's "yet another instance of shameful treatment." CUPW president Dale Clark told Nault by letter that the funding cut-off has a "divisive effect and such a decision during negotiations suggests bad faith." NUPGE president James Clancy wrote Nault saying the funding withdrawal "accentuates the legacy of bad faith and sharp dealings with the Lubicon Cree. Subjecting an already poor and exploited people to further degradations and hardship only reflects badly on you and your government."

(.....see "Nault Steps In" next page)