

# N.W.T. chief doesn't understand welfare

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Northwest Territory

Chief Harry Deneron of Fort Liard finds it hard to understand why the Territorial government prefers to dole out welfare rather than use the same money to help his community and get its people back to work.

"The social welfare worker from Fort Simpson was flying in once a month," he said, "and everyone lined up for the hand-out. I asked once how much money was paid out, and he told me between \$4,000 and \$5,000 per month.

"The council talked that over and we asked if we could have the \$4,000 and work for it. He gave us the money, and we put it in the back.

"Some guys complained—they'd been on welfare for 20 years—but most of the people really like that. We gravelled nearly all the roads in the settlement. And we made that money last four months.

There were some people who only wanted to work a day and make \$20 so they could go back in the bush. We let them. Everyone who needed some money

got work.

When the money was gone we asked for more. We wanted to gravel the airstrip so we could use it when it rained. But the guy told us they (the welfare people) were not there to make jobs for people. We couldn't get any more."

"There's a new social welfare guy now. When Commissioner Hodgson was here last fall, he told us the whole system would be revised."

"Now we get STEP (Short-Term Employment Program). But when you start reading the rules and regulations, we find we can't put a guy to work. Welfare says who will work—and he has to work eight weeks. We can't give a man \$20 so he can afford to go out in the bush again.

We're not like Fort Simpson or other places, but the rules are the same for all.

When STEP came in, we wanted to build a community hall. But they said we can't do that.

We don't want to misuse funds; we just want to help ourselves.