

Preface

This book began out of my curiosity about the way the White Paper on Indian policy was developed. My interest in the policy was fostered by my previous research experience with the Six Nations Iroquois on the Grand River Reserve in southern Ontario beginning in 1963. For a period of almost three years (1967–70), I attended most of the band council meetings, which both gave me an insight into Indian administration on a local level and also sparked my interest in the workings and policies of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), the branch of the federal government entrusted with administering Canada's Indian population.

I can readily recall the radio announcement of the White Paper in June 1969 when I was having lunch at Bobby's Grill in Ohsweken, the village on the reserve. The question most people were asking, including myself, was 'What does it mean?' The radio announcement had been too brief for much of an understanding of what was being proposed by the federal government. I recall thinking that the proposal sounded like the termination policy the United States had adopted in 1954, and rejecting the notion that the Canadian government could have made the same mistake. The American policy of terminating special rights for Indians had proven so destructive to Indian communities that it was withdrawn in 1961.

The most immediate stimulus to write this book was a request in the fall of 1975 from Dr Jan Loubser, director of the Social Science Research Council, to give a paper on the role of social science in the formulation of the White Paper at the council's conference on Social Science and Public Policy.¹ Shortly after the conference I decided to study the total govern-

ment process of policy formulation, the major concern of this book. As the research progressed the volume of material I was able to gather proved to be so extensive that the originally intended article evolved into a book.

The information on which this book is based comes from three sources; 51 interviews with 33 individuals who were involved in shaping the policy, government documents and reports, and published materials. Because this is not a study of Indian organizations, I did not interview Indian leaders, but I used their published accounts of the period in question and I corresponded with many of them to clarify or confirm certain issues.

From the winter of 1976 to early 1977 I conducted interviews in Ottawa, Vancouver, Victoria, and Toronto with most of the civil servants who played a major role in formulating the White Paper, as well as with the two ministers then responsible for Indian Affairs. Unfortunately, the major figure in the Prime Minister's Office, Jim Davey, died an accidental death before the research was begun.

None of the civil servants interviewed hold the same government positions at the time of writing that they held in 1968–69. Some have retired, one was fired, and others have left the government service voluntarily to pursue careers elsewhere. Confidentiality was a condition of most interviews, or portions of them, and consequently the sources of information are not acknowledged. In the few cases where individuals are named, I have not sought their endorsement of my analysis; the interpretation of their roles is my own. In all other instances where the analysis required singling out individuals, I have used pseudonyms, as indicated in the text. Personalities, however, were very important factors in the policy-making process and, when possible, I have described the personal styles of individuals according to either their own descriptions or those of others.

In addition to interviews, much information was obtained from government file materials. Collectively, these records provided me with specific information on most of the formal arguments presented during the policy-making process. Interviews provided necessary data on the unofficial arguments and events, as well as clarification of the contents of the documents and their use. The interviews also allowed me to decide whether the documents' contents were, in fact, the substance of the arguments or whether they were, in addition, 'strategy statements' designed to elicit responses other than the contents might suggest. Although all documents could be considered forms of strategy, there was a considerable degree of

variation in this type of usage, as I indicate in the book. Collectively, the interviews and the file materials allowed me to construct a detailed picture of how the White Paper on Indian policy was developed.

Determining the use of favoured concepts and phrases during the policy process proved to be an important part of the research. It became apparent that the policy-makers did not share the same meanings for some of the terms they frequently used. Terms such as 'non-discrimination,' 'equality,' 'aboriginal rights,' and especially 'policy' were used in different ways by different people. For some, 'policy' meant a formal substantive statement prepared in secret within government; for others it meant a process of negotiation between government and Indians that produced a mutually agreed-upon position for future action. As the policy process continued, terms reflecting certain values became loaded, such as 'special rights,' so that they were dropped and replaced by others – 'transitional rights' in this case.

In both the documentation and the interviews it was evident that individuals often talked past each other because of their different constructions of reality – their own world view, values, ideology, and professional training. For some, the term 'development,' for instance, meant economic development (capital, jobs, resource development, managerial skills), while for those with social work training and community development experience it meant broadscale social development, fostering skill in such areas as education, leadership, work, and communication. The professional backgrounds of the policy-makers – be it in administration, law, social work, sociology, community development and adult education, physics, computer science, or economics – provided them with a particular frame of reference through which they viewed the problem and sought the solution. Although senior civil servants are theoretically 'generalists,' able to synthesize many different kinds of information and perspectives, their backgrounds understandably led to varied interpretations of events and to the systematic exclusion of certain types of information: a proposal considered sound by one official was described as 'a bunch of sociological crap' by another; what made good sense to one person was considered 'an absurdly legalistic interpretation' by another; graphs and flow charts prepared by one official for cabinet's edification were considered 'useless drawings' or 'pretty pictures' by another, and so on. There is no reason whatever to expect civil servants to be less immune to cognitive frameworks they derive from their professional training and experience than other professionals – including academics – but the myth of the 'generalist' persists.

One final point is worth noting. Almost all of the persons interviewed were displeased with the final shape of the White Paper. Most of them felt that the policy objective of 'equality' was ultimately correct, but they believed it would have been acceptable, or more acceptable, to Indians had the policy-making process developed in a different way. *Post facto* rationalizations by these policy-makers cannot be ruled out as a distorting factor in the information I received. In many cases emotional neutrality did not characterize the policy-makers as they recalled the events of the period, although many of them obviously attempted to back away from the events, and even their own behaviour, by commenting in a detached fashion on why they had held certain beliefs and how they had tried to bring about acceptance of these beliefs by others. The interviews provided an opportunity for them to explain what they felt should have happened and why it did not. The extensive documentation I had of the period provided me with one basis of checking *post facto* rationalizations.

It is important to underscore at the outset that the process of policy-making is a complex one, involving formal structural features of the bureaucracy and the cabinet; a certain dynamic created by a mix of personalities, personal career motivations, and career histories; and varying degrees of conformity to roles as well as certain attempts to develop new rules and roles. The period during which Indian policy was developed saw structural change within government and considerable anticipation that far-reaching reforms might be effected under the new administration in many policy fields. It would be impossible to replay this period and totally reconstruct the intricate web of persons, ideas and ground rules that shaped Indian policy, but incomplete attempts are perhaps not without some utility. The reader must be the judge of this.

It is hoped that this book will not only be relevant for those interested in policy-making processes at the federal level, but that it will have some lasting utility for policy-makers who deal with Canadian Indians and other unorganized minority groups. The 1968-69 policy-making exercise elicited discussion within government about many ideological stances on 'special' and 'normal' status for Indians. These same arguments exist today and can be expected to arise whenever Indian policy and the Indian Act are being revised because they reflect the underlying liberal-democratic values of Canadian society. In my own opinion there will always be a liberal ideology in Canadian politics that will guide attempts to eliminate special status for Indians. Ironically, this is the same force that will bring to public attention, as it did in the 1960s, the injustices and inequities of the treatment of Indians. The implication of this for Indians is that if they want to retain special status, they will have to counteract this force by fully

rationalizing their own position with each change in the political climate. This book demonstrates that an accurate rationalization of Indian positions cannot be done within government by ministers and civil servants whose liberal ideology and personal ambitions distort the Indian viewpoint.

In addition, I hope my work will contribute to a corporate memory in government about Indian policy. In my experience I have found both ministers and civil servants unaware of past policies and the implications of these policies for both the client and the government. When ministers and civil servants leave the portfolio, they often take with them their individual experiences. As a result, the collective experience is not synthesized and lessons from even the recent past remain unlearned. Thus, policies promoted as innovative often arouse a strong sense of *déjà vu* in Indians and longstanding government employees. I hope this book will foster a corporate memory, not in the simplistic sense of separating the old from the new, but in the genuine belief that the White Paper experience can provide constructive lessons for both the government and Indians in the future.

As for my own biases, my own myth of neutrality – to the extent that I can consciously understand them – I do not believe that meaningful socio-cultural change can occur without the direct participation of, and compromise by, the persons and communities undergoing change. This position is nothing more than a basic tenet of applied anthropology. The values that guide change must be acceptable to groups that experience change. Since policy-making is basically an exercise in the selection of values to guide future behaviour, it follows in the case of Indian policy that Indians must engage in the policy-making exercise in a meaningful and informed way. Realistically, difficult compromises and trade-offs will be required, but unless these adjustments result from a joint effort on the part of Indians and government, Indians will reject them, discrediting government efforts. I do not believe there are easy solutions to complex problems, or that readily known solutions are at hand. But I do think that honest, direct discussion is the initial step – not the development of policies behind a wall of secrecy and promises of participation that are belied by government action.

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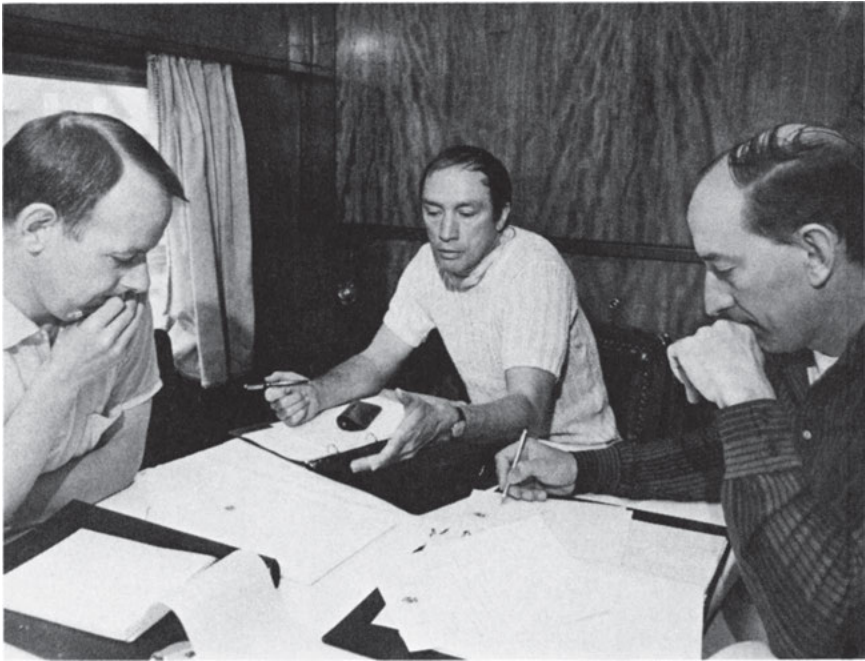
I owe a particular debt of gratitude to the many civil servants who tolerated my repeated interviews and at times extended gracious hospitality to me in their homes. The book would have been impossible without the willingness of civil servants to recall the events of the period for me. I am also grateful to several of them who reviewed the manuscript, or parts of it, and made valuable corrections and comments. Contrary to popular opinion, I found these officials to be dedicated and articulate people, many of whom were deeply committed to producing a good Indian policy that would alter significantly the unacceptable conditions of native people. Furthermore, some were far more innovative in their approach to Indian policy than the politicians were willing to accept, particularly in the area of Indian participation.

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Sally M. Weaver
Cambridge, Ontario
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Jim Davey (Program Secretary, PMO), Pierre Trudeau (Prime Minister), and Marc Lalonde (Principal Secretary, PMO) at a business session in Stratford, Ontario, in August 1968 (Dick Wallace of the *London Free Press*)



An Indian Act consultation meeting at Sudbury, Ontario, in August 1968
(DIAND Photo Division)



right The National Indian Act consultation meeting in Ottawa, April-May 1969. L to R: Isaac Beaulieu (Conference Secretary), Jean Chrétien (Minister), and George Manuel (Conference Chairman)

left Robert K. Andras (Minister without Portfolio, assigned to Indian Affairs, July 1968 to May 1969)





left An Indian Act consultation meeting, this time at Chilliwack, BC, in November 1968 (DIAND Photo Division)





Jean Chrétien and Pierre Trudeau at the presentation of the Red Paper in Ottawa,
4 June 1970



