



# Bulletin

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## THE GOVERNMENT POLICY ON CANADIAN INDIANS EXPLAINED

Last June, Mr. Jean Chrétien, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, announced federal proposals for a new Indian policy (see Canadian Weekly Bulletin, Vol. 24, No. 30, dated July 23, 1969, P. 1).

In a follow-up statement in Regina, Saskatchewan on October 2, the Minister said that although he had hoped "a vigorous debate" would take place on the proposals, discussion had "become clouded because of misunderstandings, misinterpretation, and a lack of knowledge on the part of the Canadian public of the Indian situation".

Mr. Chrétien elucidated the Government's proposals as follows:

...The policy statement is pretty clearly written. The English, French and Cree texts agree with each other. It is a straightforward document. But in this age of instant communication everyone knows within minutes that an announcement has been made, but they never seem to find out what it was that was announced.

Let me explain.

The statement is *not* a final policy decision to be implemented regardless of what anyone else says.

The statement does *not* propose or suggest that Indian reserves should be abolished.

The statement does *not* propose that the provincial governments should take over responsibility for Indian land.

The statement does *not* propose to disregard the treaties and end them unilaterally.

The statement does *not* propose that the Federal Government "abandon" the Indian people to the provinces without ensuring that the provinces have the

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resources to maintain and improve upon the existing level of programs and services.

The statement does *not* suggest that Indians, or Indian bands should be given clear, freehold title to their land within five years – or indeed within any period of time at all.

The statement does *not* advocate any weakening of Indian culture or identity. It does *not* advocate the assimilation of Indian people.

The statement is clear on all these points. On many occasions, both privately and publicly, to Indian and non-Indian people alike, I have tried to clear up these misinterpretations.

### TRUE MEANING OF POLICY

Now what did the policy say?

It says that the time has come to change a system which has been discriminatory and paternalistic towards Indian people.

It says that the proposals contained in the policy statement are to be discussed with Indian people, provincial governments and the Canadian public before any of them are implemented.

It says that provinces should extend the services to Indians that they extend to others who dwell within their domain, and that the Federal Government will transfer funds to help them do it.

It says that representatives of the Indian people