

Indian Affairs

government. In other words, the government is to treat our Indians exactly as it has treated them for the past 100 years. The great White Father is to make his decision and the Indian people must like it or lump it. The minister who has displayed good intentions is now shown in the paternalistic and bureaucratic light in which his predecessors have been shown. I continue quoting:

Throughout the consultation period we re-iterated that the Government must afford constitutional recognition of existing Treaties and obligations at which time the Indian people would meet in good faith with the government to clarify the meaning and intent of existing agreements.

Nowhere in the minister's statement was there any indication that the government had the slightest intention of dealing with basic treaty rights which Indians consider were spelled out many years ago. I continue quoting:

The Minister's policy statement appears to be a departure from the year's consultations. We view this as a policy designed to divest us of our aboriginal, residual and statutory rights. If we accept this policy, and in the process lose our rights and our lands, we become willing partners in cultural genocide. This we cannot do.

I submit that nothing said in this house by any hon. member at any time will contradict the truth of the statements I have just read. I hope the minister realizes that consultation does not mean simply listening politely to representatives of Indian peoples, as the minister and his officials have done. It does not mean the minister, after listening, will make a unilateral decision, as has happened in the past. In a participatory democracy, about which the Prime Minister spoke eloquently during the election campaign, people have the right, not only to be heard but to participate in final decisions affecting their lives and welfare. The record is clear. The government has not adopted this kind of approach. All too often in the past the Minister, in the final analysis, has consulted his departmental officials and adopted their views. All too often he has embarked on a policy which did not meet the needs and wishes of the Indians themselves. It is they, after all, who are important and it is they who have the right to say what their future shall be. The minister is a reasonable man with good intentions. I urge him to adopt policies leading towards real consultation. They are the only policies we can really tolerate in the sort of participatory democracy the Prime Minister has spoken about in the past.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, before the minister begins his remarks I wonder, [Mr. Orlikow.]

notwithstanding what may be the attitude of the Christian member for Renfrew and Larnark (Mr. McBride), whether hon. members would be agreeable to allowing more than 20 minutes for the minister to complete his remarks. He ought to be given all the time he needs and I think the 20 minute limitation ought to be suspended.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I thank every hon. member who has contributed to this debate which, in many instances, has been rewarding. It is refreshing to realize that the members of all parties in the house consider our goals to be the right ones. The problem seems to lie in how we are to implement our plans and how we are to discuss this matter with the Indian people of Canada.

One thing that stands out after a careful review of statements made by Indian leaders and by hon. members in this debate is that many have not read carefully the government's statement. In this connection the first point I wish to make is that the government's statement was a proposal. May I quote from the foreword, which is as follows:

In the pages which follow, the Government has outlined a number of measures and a policy which it is convinced will offer another road for Indians, a road that will lead gradually away from different status to full social, economic and political participation in Canadian life. This is the choice.

● (5:10 p.m.)

I quote again from the foreword:

The government commends this policy for the consideration of all Canadians, Indians and non-Indians, and all governments in Canada.

What the government was doing in issuing this statement was putting forward its view after having been in consultation with Indians for over a year, having listened to what they considered to be the evils and the faults of the present system and having formed its own view in the same connection. The government's view which was incorporated in the policy statement, was deeply influenced by everything that the Indian people have been saying about the Indian Act, about the department about their separate status, about discrimination, not only in the period of consultation to which I have referred, but for many years.

The government's view, of course, also arose out of an analysis of the merits of the situation in each of these particulars. It so happened that the results of this analysis coincided almost exactly in every instance