

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the quotation by the hon. member for Kingston and The Islands is reasonably accurate in the sense that it did reflect some of the things said yesterday. I should point out, however, that I indicated also that if one aspect of the opinions expressed by the court was to be accepted by the Indian people and the rest of Canadians it would be to the effect that they were claiming not aboriginal rights but legal rights and this would be the case with the Nishga Indians. To that degree the position we put forward a few years ago on aboriginal rights is not affected by this judgment. It is true to say, however, that the judgment has indicated new possibilities for their legal rights, and we have asked the Department of Justice to advise us further on the consequences of some of the opinions expressed. As for the statement requested by the hon. member, we would plan some time in the future to make public the position on the whole matter of Indians, which we think would be updated by the experience we have had in communicating with them over the past few years and by the various briefs they have submitted to various courts.

**Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon):** I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the Prime Minister's remarks with respect to the legal rights, as he calls them, of Indians be confined only to the Nishga people or would they be applicable to all Indian people? If the answer is yes, would they be applicable to the whole of the native population?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, the statement referred to by the hon. member for Kingston and The Islands was an opinion I expressed to the Nishga people, and the judgment that they were referring to of course concerns the Nishga tribe in their dealings with the government of British Columbia. I believe it would be the intention of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, assisted by his able parliamentary secretary, to meet with the government of British Columbia to see how they react to the opinions expressed in the judgment brought down by the Supreme Court.

**Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena):** I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Because this matter takes on additional urgency every day, I wonder whether the Prime Minister could be a little more precise in terms of an announcement by his government on the question of aboriginal rights generally? Could he inform the House with more precision when that statement might be made?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, I could not honestly think that the statement to which I referred would be forthcoming before at least a couple of months. We are, of course, prepared to have the minister and other officials deal with all aspects of the Department of Indian Affairs when the estimates come before the parliamentary committee. I understand that will be reasonably soon.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS—REQUEST THAT SPECIAL  
COMMITTEE BE ESTABLISHED

**Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena):** Mr. Speaker, I have a further supplementary. Inasmuch as the Prime Minister is going to get some advice from the Department of Justice

[Miss MacDonald (Kingston and The Islands).]

about the Supreme Court decision, may I address my supplementary to the government House leader and ask whether he is in a position to adopt the suggestion made by my colleague, the hon. member for Northwest Territories, that a special committee be established to examine the question of aboriginal rights so that this type of input will be considered as well and not just the narrow one of the Department of Justice?

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, I am not quite prepared to accept the suggestion made by the hon. member for Northwest Territories but if it will facilitate the early discussion of the question that has been raised I would be prepared, instead of waiting for the reference of the estimates to the standing committee, to consider the possibility of sending the annual report to the committee, which would give the members on the steering committee the opportunity to decide the framework of the discussions that might take place within that committee. I have not undertaken that action up to the present time because of the developing situation and especially in view of the comments made yesterday by the Indians in question that they were not keen or did not want this matter to be examined at the present time by a parliamentary committee. That was very much in my mind in not reaching a decision to refer the report to the committee.

**Mr. Nielsen:** That is just the Nishga.

**Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena):** Mr. Speaker, I do not make this remark in an unkind sense but I think the last statement of the President of the Privy Council should certainly carry with it the thought that the expression attributed to the delegation that met with the Prime Minister arose because they thought the Prime Minister was on their side.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Kingston and The Islands for a last supplementary and then we will try before the end of the question period to have two or three quick questions.

**Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and The Islands):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the President of the Privy Council. Would he now give consent to the motion I moved the other day under Standing Order 43 that the annual report of the department be referred to the standing committee?

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, I would prefer to put it down as a government order at this stage.

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SPORTS

ASSURANCE THAT MONTREAL OLYMPIC STADIUM WILL  
NOT BE USED FOLLOWING GAMES BY POSSIBLE TEAM IN  
UNITED STATES FOOTBALL LEAGUE

**Mr. Duncan M. Beattie (Hamilton Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the right hon. the Prime Minister. If one can accept the principle that the Canadian