

Indian Affairs

of these areas because these people are fearful of what may happen to these programs if the government proceeds blindly, as has been the case.

Let me refer to the example of the Eel River Bar Reserve in New Brunswick. The Indian band there made an application for \$125,000 to the Indian affairs branch of the department, and put up \$40,000 of its own money plus additional collateral in the form of \$13,000 per year expected revenue the band would receive. The band has now dropped that program for economic development of that reserve because it does not know what will flow from the present conversation the minister is having with the province, or from the direction which has been outlined. Consequently, they feel they have been cheated; that they have been exploited and that the government and the minister have chosen to ignore the fundamentals involved in an Indian affairs policy.

Many Indian people feel that the government went into the consultation process with its mind made up. They feel the government went there to listen but not to heed. The government has consulted but has not heeded, and these native people feel there may have been a basic misunderstanding or a lack of knowledge on the part of the minister and the government as to Indian affairs.

● (3:10 p.m.)

The minister gave an interview to *Time* magazine following the introduction of the policy statement in this house. In the issue of July 4 we find these words of the minister:

The more I thought, I realized that the Indians come to the federal government for one reason; because of the colour of their skins.

That is a ridiculously ignorant statement. We are involved here with the rights of people. We are involved here with something that should not have attached to it a condescending remark like that, semi-racist in nature. Surely, the minister knows that the Indian people do not come to the federal government because of the colour of their skin, hair or eyes. They come to the federal government because of our constitution. They come here because the federal government has sole, exclusive jurisdiction over Indians and lands reserved for Indians. That is what the British North America Act says. They come here because of the proclamation of King George III which respected their rights and which successive federal governments have ignored. They come here because the

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agency representing the government of Canada at that time signed the treaties. They come to the federal government because it has a legal, moral and ethical obligation to deal with their affairs. They do not come here on the basis of the colour of their skin. If that is truly what the minister and the government think, it is the cause of the difficulties and misunderstanding. Part of the program enunciated by the minister is already in effect and is the cause of resentment by the Indian people. The program has been announced and put into effect.

A cause of wonderment on the part of the native Indian people is the fact that we in this house tried to obtain a document headed "Local government on Indian reserves", and were unable to do so. This document was prepared in secret and hidden from the native people. I tried to obtain it in this house. The house made a decision on it by voting. I am not casting any reflection on the decision. I am not entitled, under the rules, to do that in any event. The minister said: Local government on Indian reserves is not my policy. If it is not his policy, why is it in effect? Who is running the department, the minister or the mandarins who work in it? If it is not the government's policy, why is it there? There is also the implementation of the program under the Department of the Secretary of State and the Department of Indian Affairs. They are starting to put into effect the policy announced on June 25.

The Indian people are very much concerned about the declaration that the government will respect what it calls the legal rights of Indians. They look at the Jay treaty and say: We have certain rights, but the Supreme Court of Canada has said the Jay treaty does not apply because the parliament of Canada never endorsed it. Is that the legal right the minister is prepared to accept, that the treaty is invalid? The native Indian people look at the Migratory Birds Convention Act, which they thought preserved their rights, and find that the courts have overruled them. The minister is prepared to endorse the ruling of the courts which has wiped out treaties in a number of instances across this country, treaties concerning health, the medicine chest treaty in the prairies and fishing rights in New Brunswick.

When the minister was asked about the Jay treaty in this house, Mr. Speaker, he said that the people who thought they were covered by that treaty could go to court. Is that the way he intends to respect what the native Indian