

Inquiries of the Ministry

lasted for a whole year. We presented these proposals as part of a framework within which we believe that in the future the Indian people will be able to solve their problems with the assistance of the whole Canadian people.

This is a working document which was tabled so that it may be considered by the Indians and the federal as well as provincial governments.

We intend to undertake long discussions with the people concerned so as to find the procedure most appropriate under the circumstances.

[English]

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I take it then that this is just a working proposal made for the purpose of discussion?

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, this is the direction the government wants to give the new policy concerning our first citizens.

[English]

Mr. Stanfield: A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the government a deadline with regard to the proposal to move out of the field of the provision of services to the Indian people? Has the minister been in official communication with the provincial governments about the proposed transfer, or has a date been set for a conference at which it might be possible to discuss the proposed transfer? Also, can the minister advise the house as to the date of such conference and whether representatives of the Indian people will be invited to attend?

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I said yesterday it was our intention to discuss those proposals with the Indian people and with the provinces.

We intend, during the coming weeks, to meet with the provincial governments' representatives and with the Indian organizations' leaders in every province. I have already met some Indian people here and I will meet some others this afternoon.

[English]

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Since great concern has been expressed by the National Indian Brotherhood and since members of the brotherhood

[Mr. Chrétien.]

may wish to have their minds put at ease on the question, may I ask the minister what his intended timetable is? Is it the intention of the government to settle, first, treaty rights and land claims before abrogating its responsibility for Indians and turning those matters over to the provincial governments? It seems to me that this matter has been of concern to the Indian people. If the minister could give some assurance that the entire question of land claims and treaty rights will be dealt with first, and settled, I think the minds of the Indian people would be greatly set at ease.

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, we intend to appoint at an early date, a commissioner who will work in co-operation with the Indians in order to analyze the various claims, classify them and recommend to the government appropriate means of solving them. At the same time, we shall continue our consultations with the Indian people as well as with the provincial governments' representatives, so as to find an appropriate formula to extend provincial services to the Indians as well as to the other citizens.

[English]

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Does the government intend to consult the Indians about the appointment of this commissioner and commission, so that they may have a commission which is working for their interests and not merely seeking their approval? May I also ask the minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The first part of the hon. member's question was in order and I think the hon. member should not be allowed to launch into a consecutive question until the minister has had a chance to reply to the first question.

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, of course it is obvious that I shall broach the subject with the leaders of the Indian associations of Canada, but the appointment of a commissioner rests solely with the government which alone is authorized to appoint one.

[English]

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Since the leaders of the National Indian Brotherhood have expressed the fear that this legislation, if implemented, will lead to Indian cultural