

Inquiries of the Ministry

in discussions with the representatives of the Department of Indian Affairs; and if so, how will this affect the terms of reference of the conference? I believe the point they raise is precisely the point raised by the leader of the New Democratic party.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I spoke with the President of the Canadian Indian Federation, Mr. Deiter, and we agreed that the Federation would prepare the agenda of the conference. The Minister without Portfolio in charge of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and myself, will be present when the Indians express the desire to meet us, and the same thing goes for the officials of my department.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Simpson (Churchill): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister be prepared to discuss fully with the Indian people at the meetings next week the legality of the treaties as they presently exist?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chrétien: Of course, Mr. Speaker, it is our intention to discuss all matters that may be of interest to the Indians and I am sure this point will be raised.

[*English*]

PLEA FOR SIMPLICITY IN LANGUAGE OF
AMENDING MEASURE

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that I detected a faint touch of ambiguity in the minister's reply to the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands, and since he told us the other day that the new Indian Act would be couched in clear and simple terms which everybody, including members of parliament, would understand, is the minister prepared to say specifically now that members of parliament will have a chance to judge for themselves before the end of the session just how clear and simple the language of the act is. In other words, will he introduce the Indian Act—not legislation on the Indian claims commission—or amendments to the act before the end of the session?

An hon. Member: He said so.

[*Mr. Dinsdale.*]

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, the house will certainly have an opportunity to realize that our Indian Affairs policy is quite clear and that the Indian Act will be particularly clear, if there is one.

[*English*]

Mr. Baldwin: I have a further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I did not ask the minister whether or not the act was clear. What I asked was whether the new Indian Act or amendments to it will be introduced to the house before the end of the session.

Mr. Woolliams: That is simple enough.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I said that I would advise the house, before the month of June, of the government policy with respect to Indian Affairs.

[*English*]

Mr. Baldwin: Answer the question.

HOUSING

PRESENCE OF RESPONSIBLE MINISTER DURING DEBATE

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister advise the house whether the minister responsible for housing will be in the house today at two o'clock when the debate dealing with this important matter begins?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Richardson, who is the Acting Minister of Housing, is in the house this morning.

Mr. Hees: I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. It is known that the minister who is still responsible for housing is in Ottawa and in the parliament buildings today. Can the Prime Minister give us any good reason why the minister is not in the house today when such an important matter is coming up for discussion?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Since this is a purely argumentative question, it is not acceptable.

Mr. Hees: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When a matter of such importance comes up for discussion in the house and the minister responsible is in Ottawa but is not