

Indian Affairs

but to the rule that there are certain documents which are intended for internal purposes to help ministers make up their minds.

Incidentally, I do not intend to ask anyone to get it back. It is the person who gave out the document who is responsible, somehow. We shall be judged in the last analysis by the way in which we orient the policies of the department and in a few months I think the hon. member will learn very clearly that I do not want to be thought paternalistic.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Would the minister permit a question? May I ask him, now that he has made this tremendously predictive speech, whether he will disown the document to which reference has been made?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chrétien: I cannot disavow or accept the document; I say that I have not even read it all and I do not intend to read it today, but I am generally aware of what is in it. It contains statements which I can accept and others which I reject. However, I cannot reject it in full; as in any other document, I take what is good in it and reject what is wrong.

[*English*]

I thank the hon. member for telling me what is bad in the document.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I wish to put a question to the minister.

He has just stated, in reply to the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard), that he has not read that document and that he does not intend to do so today. If he has not read it, how can he know what is in it and say that the document is confidential and that it cannot be tabled today?

Mr. Chrétien: This is not the point, since the document concerned was published in 1967 and dealt with the possible administration of reserves or the development of reserves into municipalities. I have read reports on the problem, but I have never fully examined the document. I am merely acquainted with the summary and I say that I do not wish to table it, since it is a document intended for internal use and for the information of departmental officials. This is why such documents may not be published.

It is a matter of principle. I think that we are entitled within an administration to exchange views. But what really matters are

not the views of Tom, Dick and Harry within a department, but the minister's decisions. The documents will help me to form an opinion. However, I do not have to accept or reject it entirely. As I said a while ago, we will take what is good in that document, as in others, and reject what is wrong.

I do not think that this attitude is contradictory.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): I shall speak only briefly on this subject.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Peters: You talked me out of it. There is so much enthusiasm being shown by hon. members who wish me to continue at length that I will do so.

An hon. Member: Oh.

Mr. Peters: This document was published by the policy and planning directorate of the minister's department. I presume it was circulated on August 4, 1967. It is not a new document. I really have not read it thoroughly; I have just glanced at it. This is a very poor copy. The department should make it a little darker for the sake of those of us who possibly need glasses.

An hon. Member: Try to get a better copy next time.

Mr. Peters: I am concerned about the secrecy employed by the department in circulating a document which certainly has some merit. If it has no merit at all, then the director should, I suggest, be fired. If these people are not producing anything of value, then we should get rid of them. I notice the minister says he has not read it. However, I should have thought his executive assistant would have considered it worthwhile bringing to his attention, or that the director himself might have been in contact with the hon. gentleman on this subject.

I have five or six Indian reserves in my riding, so I am personally interested in these matters. I was interested in the question which was raised by the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) involving Chief Pine.

Mr. Chrétien: On a point of order, this question was raised by the hon. member for Skeena and the problem was resolved after I had received representations. I declared the election was valid, and that is all. I do not understand why the hon. member should wish