

*Speech from the Throne*

The greatest contribution that this House can make is to support the efforts of the government and the people of Canada to help the first citizens of this land keep their cultural identity. It is very important for every citizen to understand what he is, accept his differences, and from there build a place in society that suits him.

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

**Mr. Chrétien:** It is this that has permitted Canada to become what it is now. We believe it is possible for all Canadians to share in the economic and social advantages and at the same time maintain their cultural diversity. I think these and other programs that have been announced today are designed to permit Canadians to find in their history, different backgrounds and cultures existing in this country the strength that will permit the building in Canada of a diversified society that will pull us all together and ensure that this country will continue to be an example to the world of understanding, broad views and, at the same time, social and economic progress.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I thank hon. members for their attention. I am sure that Canadians will welcome the general program we have announced which is intended to promote the conservation of green spaces for generations to come. It is our responsibility, as members, not only to develop short term programs but to take steps to conserve for future generations areas such as the national parks which may not be visited by a large number of Canadians in the near future, in order that the children of our children may say that during this Parliament we tried to save those areas for them, and to set up, in the fields of culture and history, the required mechanisms to allow our descendants to keep their diversity while building a country of which we can all be proud.

• (1520)

[English]

**Mr. Howard (Skeena):** I wonder whether the minister would permit a question before he formally concludes his remarks.

**Mr. Chrétien:** With pleasure; I always like the questions the hon. member puts to me.

**Mr. Howard (Skeena):** I am really interested in the answers. May I say that we listened to the minister's speech with a great deal of interest. We were pleased to hear his comments about canals, parks, architectural buildings and so on as well as his later, unrehearsed remarks about the Indian people. But if he really wishes to do something worthwhile, can he tell us when he intends to make some formal announcement about recognizing the aboriginal rights of the Indian people, and tell us, also, when he intends to remove those iniquitous sections from the Indian Act, sections which have, unfortunately, been with us for donkeys years.

**Mr. Chrétien:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is not a debate on Indian affairs but I am always glad to express the views of the government on that subject. As to the first part of the question, this matter was dealt with by the House a few years ago when two commissions of inquiry into

[Mr. Chrétien.]

Indian rights and treaties were established. The Indians have their own committee. They are studying their treaties and rights. Facilities for this inquiry have been provided by the federal government and responsibility has been assigned by the Indians to a chief whom they themselves have appointed. At this time, I do not wish to interfere. The government has appointed Commissioner Barber to look into the question for us—

**Mr. Howard (Skeena):** You have not.

**Mr. Chrétien:** He is talking with the Indians now. I believe he has begun to make some recommendations, for example, on the question of the ammunition moneys of the Indians of Alberta. I think this is the start of a co-operative approach between the Indians and the government to find a solution.

As far as the Indian Act is concerned, I recognize that it is not perfect legislation. I said from the first day I was here that I wanted a new Indian Act. But before I propose this unilaterally, I naturally wish to hold consultations all over Canada.

**Mr. Howard (Skeena):** Your predecessor started it, not you.

**Mr. Chrétien:** We have been engaged in consultation with the Indians since 1968. I recognize, of course, that my predecessor had moved in that direction, because, after all, we are all Liberals and we are acting like Liberals all the time.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Gilbert:** That's the trouble.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Order. In all fairness, I must point out to hon. members that the minister's time has now expired. The question itself was long and the answer has been very long. Therefore, so as to continue in order, I shall need unanimous consent if the minister is to finish his reply.

Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Chrétien:** I said I wanted to amend the Indian Act, and I have asked the Indians to come to me with suggestions. So far, three different Indian associations have presented their views and I am sure the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) would really be shocked if I proceeded in the absence of advice from the Indians of British Columbia.

**Mr. Yewchuk:** Mr. Speaker—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Does the hon. member rise for the purpose of asking a question? If he is, I shall need unanimous consent.

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Yewchuk:** Thank you. I shall be brief. I was interested to hear the minister's remarks and his enthusiastic conclusion, during which he spoke about preserving the culture of our first people and of making available a \$10 million fund for establishing cultural centres. In the circumstances, could the minister explain why it should have