

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

given the power to the members of the councils in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon to set the age. I hope they will set the age at 18, the same as we intend to do for election to the House of Commons.

**Mr. Howard (Skeena):** A supplementary question. The answer of the minister was not precisely related to the question. I asked the minister about the Indian Act and whether he will take steps to reduce the age of electors for the election of members to band councils and in other votes and referendums that take place on Indian reserves in Canada?

**Mr. Chrétien:** I am personally studying that matter. The study has not yet been completed because we have a problem with the Indian Act.

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

**Mr. Chrétien:** We are having discussions. We would like to change the situation, but we are in the process of negotiations with the Indians. If I say yes to the hon. member today, tomorrow he will accuse me of not having consulted the Indians.

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

[*Translation*]

**PENITENTIARIES****ST. VINCENT DE PAUL—INVESTIGATION OF SUICIDES—PSYCHIATRIC FACILITIES**

**Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the Solicitor General a question.

On several occasions I drew the minister's attention to the unfortunate suicides in St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary. The minister answered that an inquiry had been initiated by his department in order to ascertain the causes and remedy the situation. Since then, on May 18 last to be exact, there was another case of suicide at this same penitentiary.

As a preventive measure, would not the minister give immediate instructions to the penitentiary authorities, to have all new inmates undergo a psychiatric examination?

[*English*]

**Hon. G. J. McIlraith (Solicitor General):** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have examined this and other aspects of the matter. We are very much concerned about the situation in this respect in St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary. We have made a great many studies in that institution to try to get to the base of the

[*Mr. Chrétien.*]

problem and find a satisfactory solution. I do not know whether it would be appropriate in answer to an oral question to give a lengthy answer as to the kind of action we have been taking there, but I would be glad to do so at any appropriate opportunity.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Asselin:** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

Would the House allow the minister to make a statement on motions because of the great importance of this matter?

[*English*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Is the minister seeking leave of the House to revert to motions for the purpose of making a statement?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is the minister seeking the agreement of the House to revert to motions?

**Mr. McIlraith:** I would prefer to do it on Monday, but I will do so now if the House wishes.

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS****PENITENTIARIES****ST. VINCENT DE PAUL—STATEMENT BY SOLICITOR GENERAL ON STEPS TO PREVENT SUICIDES**

**Hon. G. J. McIlraith (Solicitor General):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the situation regarding suicides in penal institutions, a committee is now examining that question. With respect to St. Vincent de Paul where the situation is quite different from other institutions and where there has been a sharp increase in the number of suicides, we have taken certain additional steps applicable to that institution only. One committee has examined the situation there with particular reference to the physical aspects of that old institution.

As hon. members know, the population of that institution has been reduced to slightly over 400 from 1,200, now that the new Archambeault institution has been completed at Ste. Anne des Plaines. The old wings, which were certainly depressing and which have been described in rather strong language because of their unsuitable characteristics, are being torn down. Extensive changes