

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

fears of the Indians about their lands, and similar rights which will go down the drain once the policy of getting rid of the discriminatory laws is implemented through provincial action, can the minister state to this house and thereby assure the Indians of Canada that the problems in respect of their title to land, as well as related treaty and other rights will be settled before they are handed over to the provinces?

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to Indian lands, we have stated that we intended to submit a legislation in this regard, and, as for the observance of the treaties, the government has repeatedly stated that it would respect them.

In order to clarify the situation and help the government and the Indians to understand the exact nature of the treaties, we intend to appoint a commissioner who, together with the Indians, will study the nature and the scope of the treaties that were signed with the native peoples of our country.

[English]

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, I know perfectly well, as do all other hon. members, about the intended appointment of a commissioner to study the laws, treaties and so on. May I ask the minister that, in order to make sure the consultations with the Indians are on a proper basis and that there is no fear on their behalf in respect of the consultations, he will give the Indians the assurance that nothing will be done to remove federal responsibility until such time as the issue of their rights under treaty is definitely disposed of?

[Translation]

**Mr. Chrétien:** Mr. Speaker, the question is not to take away anything from the Indians. We wish to assure them that they are to become full citizens not only at the national but also at the provincial level, and the idea is not at all to deprive them of any services they may enjoy at the present time.

For instance some provincial governments provide them with various services in the fields of education and welfare and we only wish that the process be speeded up in future.

[English]

**Mr. Lewis:** I have a further short supplementary, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the commissioner's investigation is likely to be very lengthy and that it might even result in some approach to the court or courts,

[Mr. Lewis.]

is the minister in a position to assure the Indians that until that issue is settled the federal parliament and the federal government will remain the authority responsible for their welfare?

[Translation]

**Mr. Chrétien:** Mr. Speaker, let me make this quite clear. The Indian Act is a federal law and it will not be amended until the government has passed a new legislation to protect the rights of Indians to their lands.

We told the Indians that we intend to respect their treaties. It is obvious that by giving them such an assurance, we do not intend to hand over their lands to the provincial governments or to disregard the treaties. Furthermore, Indians will be reassured and ready to take the place which belongs to them in Canadian society, as provincial citizens.

CONSIDERATION OF NEW LEGISLATION BY  
COMMITTEE

**Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière):** Mr. Speaker, since the legislation respecting Indian lands is a federal statute, could the minister indicate when he thinks his new legislative proposal in that regard will be introduced in the House of Commons?

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, we announced our intention to submit this policy to the Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development. As soon as the house reconvenes in the fall, I hope to be able to refer it to the committee.

[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED  
POLICE

VERIGIN, SASK.—ALLEGED UNDUE SURVEILLANCE OF DOUKHOBOR CELEBRATION

**Mr. R. R. Southam (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Solicitor General, but in his absence I will direct it to the Minister of Justice. In view of the orderly and quiet celebration by the Doukhobor sect in Verigin, Saskatchewan, of the 70th anniversary of the sect's arrival in Canada, will the minister inform the house why there was an excessive number of R.C.M.P. officers present?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I believe that question should be considered at the time of adjournment.