

*Indian Affairs*

become municipalities. He warned me that there is some danger of the Indian people in these localities losing their lands or losing the money which they have in special accounts. Personally, I am not aware of that amendment, but I will look into it. As I have said many times before, I will ensure that every action taken by anyone in the department is in the best interest of the Indian people.

I feel it is important that I should point out to the hon. member that he is asking me now to overprotect the Indians and to be paternalistic. When I am not, on the other hand he blames me and says I do not care. It is very difficult. I hope that some day he will make up his mind. If he wants the Indians to take their proper place in Canada, he should allow them to make their own decisions. When one of us makes a decision it may be good or bad but this is the price we pay for our liberty. I cannot always be paternalistic and protective toward the Indians. I cannot always tell them that they have the freedom to do this or that but they must not have too much of it, or tell them to come and see me to get advice or to obtain my signature. At a certain point in time we will have to make up our minds. I think that many Indians desire to become full citizens. They want to share both the advantage and the responsibilities of being Canadians, and they want to have the same freedoms as we. We have to move in that direction and we have made some progress with the programs that we initiated a few years ago. There is a long way to go yet and many problems to solve.

For example, in terms of education we have made great strides. Ten years ago only 15 per cent of the Indian people were going to school above the fifth grade. Now 95 per cent of the Indians are in school above the fifth grade, and this has happened in the short period of 10 or 11 years. It is a big improvement. I know that education is the key, and we have to do more about it. If good education is provided to the Indian people, they will have the mobility they need to find their place in Canadian society. I think we have to favour any programs which will allow the Indian people to fit into our society. We have to admit that it is increasingly difficult for some Indians to live in the traditional way in the far north, fishing and hunting. For many of them it is not economical any more to do that, and we will have to educate them to permit them to adjust to society and to find employment.

[Mr. Chrétien.]

I am glad to report to the House of Commons that last Friday, when I was speaking in Edmonton, I said to the chamber of mines of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon that they have to take the step of giving employment to the Indian people because there is a problem of the turnover of employment in the north and the best way to solve it is to train the Indian people to do those sort of jobs. However, I think we should not always expect the Indians to adjust to us. I said to the Indian people that we have to adjust to them also, and with the Indian people we will have the best possible labour force we can have in the north. I think we are moving in the right direction.

There are other examples of the type of policy we are developing. For instance, in the contracts that we sign with some of the mines that are developing in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories that are under federal jurisdiction, we insert clauses which force companies to hire Indian or Eskimo people. I know we will have to give special training to Indians, but we have programs for that and we will develop new ones.

I am glad the hon. member is so concerned about the Indian people. I know he is sincere and he wants to do the best for them. He can criticize me—that is what I am here for—but I hope he will offer some positive criticism in order to help me solve the problems. I do not think that to produce a document which, according to the hon. member, shows a paternalistic approach will help the cause. I can read that document, but it is not a new one. It was drafted in 1967, so it could not have been drafted while I was minister. Even if it were, this is no proof that everything produced by civil servants is approved by the minister.

● (5:30 p.m.)

I hope the hon. member will agree with me that I do not have to approve everything which is put forward to me. If documents are bad, I will not approve them. This document might perhaps give the false impression that I want to be paternalistic. I do not. Because of my age, I do not think I could be a father to 250,000 people. Again, because of my background I am a very bad colonialist. I cannot, unfortunately, because of the rules, produce the document. In these circumstances, perhaps the hon. member will accept my explanation and withdraw his motion. I understand his point. The fact I do not produce the document is not related to the substance of it