

Inquiries of the Ministry

the government intends to turn the Indian health services over to the provinces, as reported in today's *Globe and Mail*, will the Prime Minister say whether his colleagues who have responsibility for Indian affairs have consulted with the Indian people on this matter?

Right Hon. P.-E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Here again I am not quite sure of the particular reference that is made to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. I am not aware of his exact declaration in this regard.

Mr. Simpson: I have a supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member must remember that he can ask questions relating to statements made outside the house only by asking the Prime Minister whether such statements represent the policy of the government. I am not sure whether the statement to which the hon. member refers was made outside the house, in the house or in committee. If it was made in committee I do not think the question can be asked.

Mr. Simpson: Mr. Speaker, might I rephrase the question. Was the Minister of National Health and Welfare stating government policy when, as recorded in the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, he announced to the provincial finance ministers that the government intends to turn over the Indian health services to the provinces.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, once again I would have to see exactly what he said. There is a long term intention on the part of the government—and this is to be debated, I suppose, as part of our Indian policy—to arrive eventually at a situation where Indians will be treated like other Canadian citizens of the particular province in which they happen to be. It may have been something along this line to which the minister was referring.

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, this question is a supplementary and is directed to the Prime Minister or to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development as the case may be. Is it the intention of the federal government to provide the necessary funds for the medical care of Indians?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, when we do embark upon this kind of transfer of responsibility we generally accompany it by an equivalent transfer of funds, either by way of

[Mr. Simpson.]

fiscal points or by way of other grants. When we do it by way of fiscal points it is generally supplemented by supplementary payments which have an equalization effect.

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether the Indian people have been consulted in respect of this announced intention of the government to transfer responsibility for their care to the provincial governments.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I am just stating the general orientation of the present government. We talked about this a great deal during the election. It is not the object of any precise policy as yet. As I stated earlier, the policy regarding Indians will be presented by the minister at a later date and will be subject to debate. I am sure before the minister does so he will continue the very intense consultations that he and the Minister without Portfolio have been conducting.

Mr. Simpson: Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a further supplementary question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Can he say whether the Indian people have been consulted on this matter?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said, we consult with the Indians on all policies which concern them. At the present time, we are holding consultations with all the provinces, and this is the first time that the Canadian government has ever undertaken such consultations. The Indians will be consulted on each one of the policies which may affect them. However, as the Prime Minister said, what we want—and the Indians are in agreement—is that they should become equal citizens in Canada.

[English]

[Later:]

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. About two weeks ago I had a question on the order paper with regard to turning Indian health services over to the provinces, and at that time the health minister stated that if they were turned over to the provinces the provinces would be responsible for paying the costs. Today the Prime Minister stated that the provinces would be compensated. I am wondering who is stating the policy of the government.