

[English]

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**INDIAN AFFAIRS****CONSULTATION ON IDENTITY OF COMMISSIONER AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development whether he will assure the house that the National Indian Brotherhood or some other representative of the Indian body will be fully consulted about the terms of reference and the identity of the commissioner proposed to be appointed, in place of a full claims commission?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I met with the members of this National Indian Brotherhood last Thursday and I discussed the problem with them. I told them that finally the appointment of a commissioner was the responsibility of the government but that I was open to their suggestions regarding possible applicants and that if they did not make any, I would advise them of the appointee selected by the government.

[English]

Mr. Stanfield: When will the commissioner be appointed and under what authority? In other words, will he be appointed under the Public Inquiries Act, some other statute or some other authority?

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, the commissioner will be appointed as soon as possible, I hope, and the appointment will come under the federal Inquiries Act.

[English]

Mr. Stanfield: I take it that means under the Public Inquiries Act. Is it a fair summary of the proposed duties of the commissioner that he will decide whether or not there is to be a claims commission and, if so, what claims would be permitted to go before that commission?

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, the commissioner's duties will be announced upon his appointment, and we will table a copy of the order in council in the house.

[English]

Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the minister whether he would consult with his colleagues in the government to determine whether he might be prepared to consider his basic premise in respect of the operation of the commissioner, so that the commissioner might be an agent of the Indian people rather than an agent of the government?

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, the commissioner will be nobody's agent but a man appointed by the government of Canada to represent all Canadians, including parliament and the Indians themselves.

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON ADMINISTRATION TRANSFER—DISCUSSION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE BEFORE APPOINTMENT OF COMMISSIONER

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): A supplementary question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Could he tell us if his offer to transfer the administration of Indian affairs to the provinces has been accepted by all Canadian provinces?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, this is not a short term policy. We shall enter upon numerous negotiations with the Indians and the provincial authorities. In fact, I intend, beginning this week, to visit the various provincial capitals in order to meet the leaders of Indian organizations and of provincial governments.

[English]

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister assure the house and the country that all proper complaints which the Indian people may have as to breaches of treaty of one kind or another will be the subject of consideration by the commissioner and by the parliament of Canada in due course?

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, in the terms of reference, it will be established of course that the government intends to abide by the treaties and any claim from the Indian people as regards treaties shall certainly be considered by the commissioner.

[English]

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is it the