

Indian Affairs

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is at least misleading for the minister to raise the inference in this House, as unfortunately members of his party did in committee, that there was an instance of prejudice against French-speaking members of that committee. In fact, what was done by myself and my colleagues sitting in that committee was that we went out of our way to delay the vote. We agreed to delay the vote until the evening, in order that there might be an opportunity for the resolution and the document on which it was based to be brought forward in both official languages. I very much resent the slur on the conduct—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. The hon. member will be recognized following the minister. If the hon. member thinks there should be some elaboration by way of debate, he can raise his point at that time. I must again ask, on behalf of other occupants of the chair and myself, that members do not use the words "point of order" to raise points which are really points of debate. This practice is becoming more and more unfair as this session continues, especially when a member knows he will be recognized and will have the opportunity to make distinctions regarding what is said by the member who has the floor.

Mr. Chrétien: As I said earlier, I think this debate today is just an attempt to try to patch up the actions of the government.

Mr. Dinsdale: What action?

Mr. Chrétien: To set up committees, to negotiate human rights in the Yukon and to negotiate the rights of Indians with the British Columbia government. That is action, not debate. Over the past five years we have helped the Indians of Canada to put their case. This was not possible previously. We have developed a mechanism of consultation that did not exist before.

Each year we spend \$7 million to help the Indians get organized, travel, put their case and have discussions among themselves. We have tried to decentralize. Many people say that we have not made any progress. We have made a lot of progress, and the Indians recognize this. When I became minister of this department there was a white man in every reserve in Canada who told the Indians what to do. This system has been changed. Band managers are now appointed by the individual bands. We have established management courses for those who head the bands. Indeed, a large part of the budget of the Department of Indian Affairs is now administered by the Indians themselves.

• (1650)

We have done our best. Of course, many problems remain. There is nothing more difficult than to face social problems like that every day. One tries to catch up, but it seems one will never succeed in doing so because of the magnitude of the problem. There is one thing of which I should like to remind the House. When I became minister in 1968, the budget was \$120 million. This year, five years later, it amounts to \$330 million. I heard the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) say something about a great bureaucracy. I am glad to be able to

destroy that myth. The number of civil servants in the Indian affairs branch has not increased in the last five years, if one excludes the teachers. There is nothing I can do about the number of teachers because more children are going to school and we have to provide more teachers for them. But excluding the educational side, there are fewer civil servants in the branch than there were in 1965.

This reflects progress, because the Indians are now taking responsibility upon themselves. In a couple of places on the Prairies there are school boards entirely run by Indians. They operate the schools, hire the teachers, and so on. I hope to place before the committee very soon a new education policy. It is based on a positive study, and it has been the subject of discussion with the National Indian Brotherhood. We have agreed on a new Indian education policy. This is real progress. It is not only talk. It is much more than that. I believe we shall continue to progress.

This question of Indian rights is very important, of course. There is a lot of emotion surrounding it. I am glad everyone agrees that we should recognize Indian rights in this land. We have already done so. But there are some very far reaching implications which prevent our going too fast or in too many directions at the same time. We are trying to establish the right course of action, not only in theory but in practice. In the Yukon I am very hopeful we can come up with a solution which will be a pattern for the rest of Canada, that is, for the Indians who have not signed treaties.

Mr. Howard: That is what is wrong with it.

Mr. Chrétien: I understand that yesterday a very good brief was presented to the committee on this very point. Some of the Indians are very emotional about their treaties and do not want those treaties to be changed. Others say the treaties should be renegotiated. There are questions which can legitimately be asked. I believe the committee should go into these aspects before making recommendations. I believe it should not simply make recommendations in general terms after deliberating for five minutes. There are questions to be asked of the Indian leaders about some of the implications. It is not an easy matter. I have lived with this problem for five years. In one part of Canada there is one interpretation of the value of a treaty. In other parts there is another interpretation.

We have said we shall respect the Indian treaties, and we have established a mechanism to help the Indians to obtain remedies from the Crown for the wrongdoing of the Crown. Already we have begun to settle some of these claims. For example, Commissioner Barber has so far negotiated at least 12 different treaty claims with the Indians. One of those has been settled and paid—I think it is with the Blood Indians of southern Alberta. This is something positive, a mechanism which has not been available for a long period. At first, the Indians were somewhat uneasy about the role of Commissioner Barber. Indeed, it was 18 months before he could really start doing his job. This is not because of fault or shortcoming on the part of anyone. It is because there is a big gap of misunderstanding between the white society and the Indi-