

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Madam Speaker, I would have to read the provisions. I would have to read her speech. I have not read the speech but I will read it and I will be pleased to answer the Leader of the Opposition tomorrow. I do not think it is unreasonable to say that we do not all zealously go around reading each other's speeches. I assume that my colleagues can make a speech, speaking for government authority, and I am assuming that my colleague the Minister of National Health and Welfare did so.

There is a refinement, however, that perhaps the Leader of the Opposition should consider. I will check the legality of it, but if my memory serves me right, when a minister does exercise those unique powers of exemption under the Indian Act—which in fact frustrates the application of the Indian Act, which is the discriminatory part—then I believe a special order in council procedure is required. I will check that. It may be that this is what my colleague is referring to.

May I conclude by saying that not only is my colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, particularly concerned about this discriminatory feature, but she has been one of the foremost spokesmen in the government for doing away with this discrimination once and for all.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## GOVERNMENT POLICY

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, I was not asking a question about a speech. I was asking whether, when the Minister of National Health and Welfare answered a question posed by the hon. member for Cariboo-Chilcotin in this House today, she was speaking the policy of the government. Can the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development say that?

**Miss Bégin:** Ask me.

**Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Madam Speaker, I have already told the opposition, and I am now telling the Leader of the Opposition, what the policy of the government is. Whatever I heard quoted in her speech did not differ from that policy one iota, in my opinion. What I have said is with regard to the fine print in my colleague's speech which was quoted, and knowing the capacity of some hon. members to be rather selective in their quotes, I should like to read the speech and then I will be more than happy to answer the Leader of the Opposition tomorrow.

## MINISTER'S STATEMENT

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, the government might seek refuge in fine print but the status Indian women have lost their status unnecessarily over the last two years, because this government refused to act, unlike the government I had the honour to lead which was beginning to act in January, 1980.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:** Indeed, this government is still delaying action that would bring equality to Canadian status Indian women.

Let me ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare if her colleague agrees with her when she indicated in the House today that no Indian woman has lost her status since 1976.

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Madam Speaker, I would be happy to repeat exactly what I hope I said in Vancouver since I do not have the transcript of my speech.

I explained to the Women's Network in Vancouver that there is a role that could be actively played everywhere in government in various instances. I used as an example the occasions when my former colleague, Iona Campagnolo, who sat next to me, and I were women ministers sitting in particular on the special committee of council, and used the limited power, it is true, but we used it positively all the time I sat on that committee, and I sat on it since 1976, although I do not sit on it now. We refused the unanimity needed to approve certain losses of status by Indian women. We did that systematically. That was within our power and we exercised it, knowing full well what we were doing. We did that expressing the wish of this government that Section 12 be repealed, and it will be repealed. My colleague, the minister responsible for the status of women, announced that some time ago in this House, and it is being done and will be done in a human way by consultation with the various bands.

I am pleased to have an opportunity to make a correction of some words. I said 41 women were reinstated in their status but I made a mistake. I meant 41 bands.

Further to that policy of the government, which the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition knows very well because his colleague, the hon. member for Kingston and The Islands, subscribed fully to the only action the caucus of women of this House of Commons took, and that this government applied. Forty-one bands have already—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

## NUMBER OF WOMEN AFFECTED

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, will the Minister of National Health and Welfare or the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development tell this House how many status Indian women have lost their status since 1976?

**Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Madam Speaker, I will get the precise figure, but I can almost assure the Leader of the Opposition that fewer women have lost their status as a result of the policy implemented by this government, when we succeeded his government and applied the policy whereby we met the chief and band council to direct us to use our powers of exemption to prevent Indian women from losing their status.