

*Indian Affairs*

about the Indian people which he has said over the months if within his heart he really did not feel it was desirable to make this document public.

I know that the minister's confrere, that other chief who is trying to run the department, the hon. member for Port Arthur, feels in his intestines that a document like this should be made available. The difficulty is that these hon. gentlemen are subject to the pressures of the department. They have not got guts enough to stand up to the deputy minister and departmental officials who have been making life miserable for the Indians for a donkey's years. They have not got the intestinal fortitude to tell them what to do. Instead they are telling you.

• (5:20 p.m.)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has expired.

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has just told me why I should not produce the document, because he said it is a bad document and is paternalistic. If this is so, it is not my policy to be paternalistic to the Indians. I do not want to create the impression that it is the policy of the government to be paternalistic. However, we will be judged by our acts. Even if we produce thousands and thousands of documents, what will count in the last analysis is what the government and I will decide in terms of making it possible for the Indians to make their own decisions. We will not be judged by what some member of the department may write about the problem but rather by the decisions we will make. It is on that basis that the Indian people will judge us.

I am quite happy that the hon. member has asked me to produce the document. The reason I am not doing so is not that I am too shy to produce it but that if I were to do so someone in the Indian community would be sure to say that it is our intention to be paternalistic. Perhaps there are some people in the department who have such an approach and such a mentality, but I can assure the hon. member that because of my background I could not possibly make a good colonialist, and it is certainly not my inclination to be paternalistic. If that is the impression of the hon. member for Skeena from reading the document, then he will agree with me that there is no point in tabling it. If it

gives the impression of a paternalistic attitude on the part of the government, we do not wish to create any such impression.

There is another argument which I want to make. If we were to produce every document that some people in the department decided to prepare in order to put forward new ideas, then it would be impossible to operate the department. We have nothing to hide. Certain internal propositions are made which appear in documents that are not yet complete and which, if tabled too soon, can create a bad impression. The hon. member knows very well that I have said many times to Indian communities that I will make sure the Indian people of Canada will have the opportunity to make their own decisions at the band and at the reserve levels. I think this is badly needed because it will give the Indian people the opportunity to develop leadership qualities. Studies are made along these lines to see what kind of government can be given to the Indian people at the band level. They are useful, but at some point we will have to make a decision when we revise the Indian Act. It is at that time that these things will be changed.

I said to the hon. member and to the public in general that I think that most of the Indian people right now are willing and able to make their own decisions, but we have to make it possible for them. I do not think it is right for me to be obliged to sign a document when an Indian wants to get a loan from C.M.H.C. If he wants to do that, he should be able to deal directly with the corporation and not come to me as if I were his white father.

**Mr. Peters:** What the Indian wants is a rich guarantor.

**Mr. Chrétien:** Many things have to be changed. For example, I do not think it is right that in 1969 all the Indian lands are still in the hands of the minister as a trustee. We have to do something about this. This land belongs to the Indians and they should be free to do what they want with it.

I cannot agree to produce the document because it is an internal document. As the hon. member for Skeena said, if it is a bad document I do not want to give a false impression to the Indian people. In fact, he himself said it is not necessary to produce it.

I am glad he asked other questions and I will look into them. He asked a very important question about the British Columbia government and what it has decided in order to make it possible for Indian reserves to