

Statement by The Honourable Jean Cretien,  
Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development  
Based on a Speech Delivered in Regina, October 2, 1969

Part 1

In June I announced the Government's proposals for a new Indian policy. I hoped that a vigorous debate might start over the policy proposals put forward. The debate duly began and is continuing, but much of it is not over the proposals advanced by the government. The debate has become clouded because of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and a lack of knowledge on the part of the Canadian public of the Indian situation.

The policy Statement is pretty clearly written. The English, French and Cree texts agree with each other. It is a straightforward document. But while in this age of instant communication everyone knows within minutes that an announcement has been made, few seem to find out what it was that was announced.

Let me explain.

The statement is NOT a final policy decision to be implemented regardless of what anyone else says.

The Statement does NOT propose or suggest that Indian reserves should be abolished.

The Statement does NOT propose that the provincial governments should take over responsibility for Indian land.

The Statement does NOT propose to disregard the Treaties and end them unilaterally.

The Statement does NOT propose that the federal government "abandon" the Indian people to the provinces without ensuring that the provinces have the resources to maintain and improve upon the existing level of programs and services.

The Statement does NOT suggest that Indians, or Indian bands should be given clear, freehold title to their land within five years - or indeed within any period of time at all.

The Statement does NOT advocate any weakening of Indian culture or identity. It does NOT advocate the assimilation of Indian people.

The statement is clear on all these points. On many occasions, both privately and publicly, to Indian and non-Indian people alike, I have tried to clear up the misinterpretations that have grown up around them.

Now what does the policy statement say?

It says that the time has come to change a system which has been discriminatory and paternalistic towards Indian people.

It says that the proposals contained in the policy statement are to be discussed with Indian people, provincial governments and the Canadian public before any of them are implemented.

It says that provinces should extend the services to Indians that they extend to others who dwell within their domain and that the federal government will transfer funds to help them do it.

It says that representatives of the Indian people should be involved in discussions with the provinces.

It says that federal departments will do this concurrently with those provinces which agree.

It says that the Indian people should control their own land.

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