Unfortunately, for the moment these negotiations have broken down and British Columbia has filed a "request in the application" with the International Joint Commission, requesting that it annul or rescind its 1942 order giving the city authority to flood the valley, subject to reaching agreement on compensation with British Columbia.

The hon. member asked why the federal government had not supported the province in this request. In fact, British Columbia neither requested nor required any such federal support in making its approach to the commission. The IJC had earlier ruled that it could hear British Columbia's 1974 request on this subject, a position strongly advocated by the Canadian government in support of the province.

The Canadian government believes that British Columbia's request deserves a full and fair hearing and that the IJC is the proper forum for this. The commission has asked for views from interested parties, including the Canadian government, by December 17. We are now preparing our response. We hope that British Columbia's approach to the IJC will be instrumental in promoting a successful resolution of this issue and we will do all in our power to assist such an outcome.

Over the past decade the government has left responsible U.S. authorities, including President Ford, in no doubt that we would view with deep concern any developments which could result in the Skagit Valley being further flooded. We expect that no action will be taken by Seattle until the IJC has had a fair opportunity to consider the full range of subjects raised by the request.

● (2220)

THE CONSTITUTION—INQUIRY WHETHER LETTER RECEIVED FROM NATIONAL INDIAN BROTHERHOOD REQUESTING DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, November 7, I wanted to know whether the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) would meet with the leaders of Canada's native organizations to discuss the constitution. We all know the Prime Minister promised that native people would be able to participate in all decisions about the constitution which directly affected them. We all know this promise was broken and that the native people were locked out of any decision-making process regarding the present constitutional resolution. Native people have expressed fears that their rights are being ignored and denied. Experts in constitutional law agreed that their fears well founded.

In response the government pointed to section 24 of the Charter of Rights which indicated that nothing in the charter denied "any rights or freedoms that pertain to the native peoples of Canada". No recognition, no guarantees; only a statement that the charter does not take away any rights which may exist.

Indian, Metis and Inuit leaders want to sit down with the Prime Minister to explain their position. They want to find out what kind of amendment might be acceptable to the government. When I raised this request, the Prime Minister responded by pointing to the $1.4 million the government made available so that native organizations could develop their constitutional position. But money is no substitute for a meeting which could produce results. With regard to money, I might point out that the government spent some $6 million advertising its position and trying to sell it to the Canadian people. Compared to that the $1.4 million to native organizations is not too substantial.

In addition the Prime Minister raised the "ante" for native people wanting to get into the constitutional game. He demands that the various native organizations representing different peoples should reach not only a common understanding of their rights among themselves, but also that their amendments must be acceptable to all parties in the House and hopefully to several of the provincial governments.

I have not noticed any great concern for such unanimity with any other part of the constitution. The Government of Canada, as successor to the Imperial government of Great Britain, is involved in a compact with native people which predates the compact with the provinces at confederation. It is the responsibility of the federal government to honour that compact and to ensure that the provinces honour it also. We see the double standard of the Prime Minister most clearly when we contrast his concern for educational language rights with his laid-back attitude to native rights.

At his November 7 press conference, the Prime Minister said:

> I am convinced that there would never be an entrenched charter of rights. Particularly, there would never be entrenched educational language rights if it weren't done now by the national Parliament the last time, as it were, that we had a possibility of proceeding in this way to amend the constitution. In other words, once we have a constitution in Canada, whether it be with the Victoria formula, or any other formula, we will never get anything saying that all Canadians are equal, because there will always be some provinces—

And he went on to detail the opposition which would come from the provinces.

On October 30, just a week earlier, in a letter to the leaders of national native organizations, he said:

> I believe that Canadians, with new-found pride in their own constitution and in their new maturity as a country, will be more than ever generous in considering the needs and wishes of our first citizens. In short, I believe that constitutional change after patriation will become easier rather than harder—

For language rights he considers that it will be impossible to deal with after patriation; for native rights he takes the very laid-back attitude that it will be easier.

On behalf of the native people of Canada, I ask the government to treat native rights as seriously as it treats language rights. I ask the Prime Minister to sit down with the leaders of Canada's native organizations to find acceptable ways of recognizing those rights and guaranteeing them in our constitution.

● (2225)

Mr. Ron Irwin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the hon. member again that the native peoples will be heard at the constitutional discussions. The hon. member has referred to a letter written by the Prime