

ter. In spite of some rather euphoric press reports, the federal Government is not proposing to entrench the right of aboriginal peoples to self-government except where such rights are defined by agreement with the provinces. There is no commitment to a time-frame or agenda in order to reach any such agreement. Again, aboriginal people will have to bargain from a position of weakness. If no agreement is reached, they will have to start all over from scratch. Is the Government prepared to recognize explicitly the right of aboriginal peoples to self-government, and will it alter the federal proposal to do so?

**Hon. David Crombie (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member is probably aware, we have had two preparatory meetings at the ministerial level with aboriginal groups and Ministers from all provinces. They have been very, very good discussions. The federal proposal as it was at that stage was distributed at that time, and I can assure the Hon. Member that the meeting next week on April 2 or April 3 will be very productive for the rights of Indian people.

#### FEDERAL ROLE

**Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. The question has not been asked, but I would—

**Some Hon. Members:** You're telling us!

**Mr. Manly:** The question has not been answered.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** You were right the first time.

**Mr. Manly:** The previous question was not answered, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he is aware that the Province of British Columbia was not even represented at yesterday's meeting? Is the Government prepared to use some of its authority and moral suasion to deal with the recalcitrant provinces and ensure that they get on board on the whole question of entrenching aboriginal rights? Or is it simply going to work for the lowest common denominator of what the recalcitrant provinces are willing to accept?

**Hon. David Crombie (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, I think the track record of this Government in bringing consensus to all parts of the country, involving all provinces, shows that it has the ability to do so at the conference next week.

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#### SOCIAL AFFAIRS

##### LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

**Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. As he knows, the

#### Oral Questions

National Council on Welfare released a study yesterday which shows that some four million Canadians live below the poverty line. Those poor in our society realize that your spending priorities are for 20 per cent pay increases for your political hack appointees—

**Some Hon. Members:** Order.

**Mr. Frith:**—some 54 per cent increases in the salaries of your chiefs of staff, but the poor in our country—

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** The Speaker is not a hack. Order.

**Mr. Frith:**—but the poor in our country want to know, Mr. Speaker, where do the problems of the poor rank in your list of spending priorities?

**Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member will know that it is not only the intention of this Government but I think of every Canadian to see the economy improve in order that poverty can be reduced. I think that is a given, and that is a political priority of this Party, of the Minister of Finance, indeed of all of us. The major impact on poverty would be from getting the economy turned around, creating more jobs and creating economic wealth.

#### CONSEQUENCES OF OIL AGREEMENT WITH WESTERN PROVINCES

**Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury):** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister therefore give a guarantee to this House that in the May 20 Budget the poor in our society are going to be protected from that oil energy agreement just signed with western Canada?

**Mr. Shields:** That is why you are sitting where you are now.

**Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** I will tell the Hon. Member that, first of all, getting an oil agreement with the provinces is going to help the country create the very jobs I spoke about.

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

**Mr. Frith:** What about the poor?

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** The second point I would make is that we lost jobs because of their National Energy Program, which hurt the poor. Surely he knows enough about social policy to know that you cannot have such an artificial economy as they tried to create, which hurt the poor more than anything else.