

Oral Questions

are not? Does it have something to do with the complexion of the governments of the other two provinces, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia?

● (1450)

Mr. Speaker: With respect, that seems to be precisely the question put by the hon. member for St. John's East at the beginning of the question period.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): But we didn't get an answer.

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PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE**PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT CONCERNING ONE PARTY DEMOCRACY—REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION**

Mr. Tom Cossitt (Leeds): Mr. Speaker, I have a question I would like to direct to the Prime Minister. It arises from a document issued by his office following the recent London Commonwealth Conference at which he gave a press conference. It concerns what he referred to as one party democracy at certain times being a good form of democracy and that such a thing might be argued for Canada some day. Will the Prime Minister explain to this House whether it is government policy to lead this country in such a direction? Will he give us the full meaning of what appears to be a rather undemocratic and somewhat demagogic remark in London?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if this country ever turned to a one party government, it would be because of members on the other side like the hon. member for Leeds.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cossitt: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I heard the Prime Minister's reply in its entirety because of the noise on the other side. However, I must say his words are very clear in his press release. I would therefore like to ask him another question. Did his statement which he made at the Commonwealth Conference in London represent any undisclosed policy or any policy that is presently under consideration but not yet in effect to downgrade parliament and move us further toward government by the Prime Minister's office?

Mr. Trudeau: No, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member must be referring not to a press release but probably a transcript of a press conference I gave when I was in London. It was in answer to a question from some member of the media asking me if we should not exclude from the Commonwealth governments which were governed by one party democracies. I went to some length to indicate that the overwhelming majority of participants in the Commonwealth were not of the parliamentary democracy type but had one-party states and that if we were to exclude all of them, we would be in some difficulty. We would certainly end up with an all white Commonwealth, which is not my idea of a Commonwealth.

[Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich).]

Based on that, as the hon. member will see if he takes the trouble to read the answer in its entirety, I said it was up to each country to give itself the kind of government it wanted and that for some countries the one party democracy, one party state, was a legitimate form of government.

Mr. Cossitt: As it is pertinent to my final supplementary, may I quote the exact sentence. "I would not be prepared to think that I would be successful in arguing that", that is a one party democracy, "for Canada at the present time but such time might come, who knows?" Will the Prime Minister explain that statement to the House.

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As the members of the media who were there will testify, I said that with a bit of irony and with a smile. My feeling was that it is really the opposition that is making that conclusion inevitable, not my own policies.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS**LAY-OFFS IN CAPE BRETON—GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. In his absence, may I pose it to the Acting Minister of Transport. I refer to a letter that I wrote the minister on June 23 condemning the actions of Canadian National Railways on Cape Breton Island in their continuing policy of cutbacks and layoffs on Cape Breton Island, adding to an already unbearable unemployment rate. I realize that the minister has not had time to reply as yet. However, in view of the fact it has come to my attention that further cutbacks are to take place today in the taking off of the back-shift shunter out of Sydney, thus eliminating another five jobs, and it is also the intention of CN to take off what is known as the Sydney shunter which deals with local industries, removing the jobs of the yardmaster, an engineer and two trainmen, another four jobs, will the acting minister contact officials of the CN Atlantic region immediately to ascertain just what is going on?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I will take that question as notice for the acting minister and be sure that the hon. member receives an answer.

Mr. Muir: I thank my colleague from Cape Breton for taking an interest in the question which the acting minister did not seem to know about. At the same time, will he ascertain from CN if it is their intention to remove the major portion of their present office located at North Sydney to Halifax, thus removing more jobs from Cape Breton Island?

Mr. MacEachen: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I will take that as notice and consult with the hon. member for Halifax.