

Mr. Trudeau: The right hon. gentleman has not left the House, but he moved from his place because, I suppose, he was afraid I would take a shot at him.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: He is going back to his seat; fire away.

Mr. Trudeau: Having dealt with the preamble of the question of the Leader of the Opposition, the government has no objection to referring all annual reports of Crown corporations, but I do not think we would want to make that part of any law because I think the opposition would find its schedule somewhat overcrowded. The opposition complains now that it does not have time to consider the estimates of departments, and if it wants to refer reports of Crown corporations, it will not have time even to do the things which relate directly to the government let alone those things which relate indirectly to the government.

Mr. Clark: One thing this House need never fear is that the Prime Minister might sometime answer questions directly. After the Prime Minister's latest approach to a pirouette would he agree as a matter of policy to recommend a change in the Standing Orders of the House of Commons—we would certainly accept such a change—regarding references of annual reports of Crown corporations to standing committees in a way which would allow the opposition parties to choose those annual reports that they would like to have referred each year, thus ensuring that there would be a capacity in parliament to review the activities of Crown corporations and to participate in policy direction? Would he agree—I see he is consulting with the House leader, who performed in a sterling way in his absence—to that kind of amendment to the Standing Orders to give parliament a role in the direction of Crown corporations?

● (1440)

Mr. Trudeau: I did confer with the House leader and he has confirmed what I said in my first answer, that if the opposition wants to refer any particular annual report and time is made for it in the conduct of the debates, we would gladly entertain that suggestion. I would just repeat that it does not seem to be a good practice to make it automatic or to give the opposition the right to select at random. This is an amendment to the Standing Order—

An hon. Member: We are talking about parliament selecting, not the opposition.

Mr. Trudeau: The Standing Orders apply, of course, to parliament, but sometimes they can be changed to suit the convenience of the opposition and sometimes they can be changed in the interest of parliament as a whole.

Mr. Paproski: Too many jumps on the trampoline.

Mr. Trudeau: We have suggestions of our own for changing the Standing Orders, and if the House leaders want to get together, they can improve them.

Oral Questions

Mr. Clark: The Prime Minister once again is demonstrating his claim to the title of "Wizard of If". I would like the Prime Minister to tell the House of Commons whether he is prepared to have the Standing Orders of parliament changed to allow a regular review of those Crown corporations which parliament chooses to review and, if not, why not?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we would be prepared to change the Standing Orders in that way if the opposition would be prepared to change the Standing Orders so that the second reading of any bill would last only one day.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

* * *

INDIAN AFFAIRS

MEASURES TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS FOR NATIVES— DISCUSSION OF TREATY RIGHTS

Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. In view of the exchange between Prince Charles and the Indian chiefs concerning the visit in Alberta at which Prince Charles expressed his concern about many of the hardships endured by native people in Canada and the Indian chiefs expressed their concern with regard to the encroachment of their treaty rights, unemployment, poverty and the problems with alcohol, has the minister any specific programs dealing with some of these critical issues?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): I have, Mr. Speaker, but there are too many of them to discuss in the House in the question period.

An hon. Member: We'll give you time.

Mr. Gilbert: Mr. Speaker, probably the minister should direct his attention to the question of treaty rights and the encroachment the Indian chiefs are alleging. With regard to the discussions that would be taking place in the near future concerning treaty rights, is it the intention of the minister to present specific proposals so that they would form the basis of discussion with the Indian chiefs?

Mr. Allmand: Many things were discussed. Some of them had to do with the treaties, some with economic development, some with local control. I might say that this afternoon we are having a meeting of the joint committee of the cabinet and the National Indian Brotherhood regarding certain matters relating to the revision of the Indian Act, and so on. Furthermore, I have been asked to return to Alberta on September 22, which is the actual date of the signing of Treaty 7, for further discussions on that treaty and what might be done to improve it.

Mr. Clark: Send Alastair to renegotiate it.