

Inquiries of the Ministry

cerning the finalization of any date. But I will be glad to take the hon. member's question as notice and see whether I can make a statement on the subject tomorrow, or the next day, because I appreciate its importance.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH RAILWAY LEGISLATION**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Reg Cantelon (Kindersley): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport; it has to do with government procedure relative to the railway bill, Bill No. C-120. Would the minister tell us when he expects to proceed with this bill.

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, if you will permit me to do it, perhaps I could say to the whole house that I was hoping to have discussions with hon. gentlemen opposite who were particularly interested in the bill and see if it would be possible by agreement to have, not the bill itself but the subject matter of the bill—because we have no hope of passing it in this session—referred, almost immediately, to the railway committee, so we could use the time of the rest of this session to hear some of the representations that many people are anxious to make about this bill, and thus facilitate its passage by reducing the time that would be required for its consideration at the next session.

I would hope that this course, after discussion with hon. gentlemen opposite about the business of the house, might commend itself to all parties in all quarters of the house. It would involve no one committing himself to the principle of the bill at all, but would merely make the bill available for study so that the committee could do some useful work.

INDIAN AFFAIRS**CLOSING OF INDIAN HOSPITALS**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Colin Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of National Health and Welfare and is in reference to the reports which came to Ottawa quite recently about the government's projected program to close the Indian hospitals. It would appear to me, sir, that the department has either said too much or too little, and the rather vague statements that emanated from Ottawa have caused a great deal of concern among the

[Mr. Pearson.]

employees of the Indian hospital in Nanaimo, among the Indian population and also among the authorities of the local regional general hospital who are concerned that they may at some unspecified date be faced with the necessity of accommodating a number of patients from the Indian hospital.

I would like to ask the minister whether her department is now prepared to give a more definitive statement as to this program of closure and to tell the people definitely at what date this hospital is going to be closed. I would also like to ask her whether, before doing that, she is planning to consult with the local provincial authorities of the B.C. hospital insurance service to make sure that they will authorize the necessary expansion of the services of the general hospital to accommodate the Indian patients who will be displaced when her program goes into effect.

Hon. Judy V. LaMarsh (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, it is to be regretted that my hon. friend did not give me notice, and I shall take his question as notice.

Mr. Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, can the lady minister not answer my question?

An hon. Member: She doesn't know anything about it.

Miss LaMarsh: I will take the question as notice.

CANADIAN CONSTITUTION**CONSIDERATION BY HOUSE COMMITTEE OF AMENDMENT FORMULA**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the right hon. Prime Minister. I sent him brief notice of it. My question is this: On November 6 the Prime Minister, in answer to a question of mine, promised to make a statement shortly as to the procedure for bringing before parliament the vitally important question of constitutional amending procedures. Is the Prime Minister now in a position to give this statement to the house and let the house know whether a parliamentary committee will be set up to examine this rather important matter?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do remember having made that statement and I had hoped to have been in a position before the recess to clear up