

The matter, of course, continues in the Province of British Columbia. The communication between the Prime Minister and the Premier involved a number of questions which the Prime Minister, the Department of Justice, and others are still considering. As the responsible Minister I kept in constant touch with the parties involved over the Christmas break and as recently as last night. I would like to assure the right hon. gentleman and the House that matters are delicate and difficult but, I think, sensible. We are trying to achieve a process through which we can satisfy all parties. Those discussions are on-going.

PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we appreciated the visit of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to British Columbia on this very serious environmental and native claims matter. Would he advise the House whether the Prime Minister has protested, to the Premier of British Columbia, about the resumption of logging on the Queen Charlotte Islands prior to the filing of the report of the B.C. Wilderness Committee?

Hon. David Crombie (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, some weeks ago the Prime Minister asked me to undertake, on behalf of the Government, our positions, and also to make sure that we invoke, evoke, or provoke, but certainly establish a process to allow the contending interests to be accommodated. He has made that clear to everyone, including the Premier of the Province of British Columbia. The letter from the Premier of the Province of British Columbia to the Prime Minister reflects that fact.

HAIDA LAND CLAIM

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Would the Minister prevail upon his Prime Minister to protest, in strenuous terms, the resumption of logging? Since we seem to have no resolution of the logging or environmental matters, could the Minister give us a brief status report on the Haida land claim?

Hon. David Crombie (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Yes, indeed. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the matters are quite related. Some of the questions raised by the Premier of the Province of British Columbia and by other people in that province I think will be dealt with, at least in part, by the recommendations contained in the review of land claims which I commissioned last July. I have now received that report. It is being translated, edited, and printed. By the beginning of February I am hoping that there will be some recommendations before the Cabinet and for public discussion which will assist us in that regard.

Oral Questions

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

FUTURE OF NEWFOUNDLAND RAILWAY

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. Last September 10 in this House I asked the Minister about plans to shut down the Newfoundland Railway. At that time the Minister accused me of spreading rumours. In the interim the Minister himself, the Premier of Newfoundland, and CN have all confirmed that plans are under way to axe the Newfoundland Railway and the 800 jobs involved.

Will the Minister come clean with Newfoundlanders and assure us in the House today that he will put an end to back room secret negotiations, consult the railway employees involved who, to this point, have not been consulted, and consult the Newfoundland business community before any decision is taken to axe that railway?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I presume the Hon. Member is referring to an article that appeared in *The Globe and Mail* this morning which is, unfortunately, grossly inaccurate, indeed potentially damaging and, to a great extent, alarmist.

• (1420)

To deal precisely with the point which the Hon. Member has raised with respect to the Newfoundland Railway, CN's five-year plan does not propose the abandonment of the Newfoundland Railway. If it is to be maintained as an imposed public duty, CN should be compensated for any losses that are derived therefrom.

I can assure the Hon. Member that if there is any decision to be made with respect to the future of the Newfoundland Railway, particularly regarding his allegation that it might be discontinued, full discussions and consultations will be carried out with the Government of Newfoundland and all affected parties.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER MEET EMPLOYEES AND UNIONS

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, the operative word in the Minister's answer is "if" it is to be maintained. That is precisely the point. Negotiations and discussions are now ongoing. They have been ongoing for months. The employees affected have been told nothing.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. No preambles please, just a question.

Mr. Tobin: I ask the Minister again if he will do the proper thing—I know he agrees with me—go to Newfoundland, convene a meeting with the employees affected, the unions and their representatives, lay the cards on the table and come clean with the people of Newfoundland about the future of that railway, instead of dealing in the backroom with Brian Peckford?