

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

**Mr. H. E. Gray (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I am here this evening to respond to the remarks of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), on behalf of and at the request of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury).

I must say I personally regret that there is nothing I can add to the response of the President of the Treasury Board when he answered the hon. member's question on February 11. However, perhaps I can repeat what I have said on other occasions when I have attempted to answer similar questions, namely that concern over the question of increased pensions for retired civil servants has been expressed by members on all sides of the house. The government has been giving consideration, and continues to do so, to this question of retired public servants. I can assure the hon. member that the matter continues to be, to paraphrase the words he quoted, under both serious and active consideration by the government at the present time.

INDIAN AFFAIRS—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONS OF MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO

**Mr. Frank Howard (Skeema):** Mr. Speaker, on the 19th of the month I posed a question to the Prime Minister that I think I should re-read now. As recorded at page 5710 of *Hansard* I asked this question:

Mr. Speaker, in the absence of both ministers involved with Indian affairs and northern development I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether he can enunciate clearly at an early date what the responsibilities and duties are of the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Andras) in respect of his association with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, because there is a great deal of doubt about this in the minds of the native Indian people. They should like to know what his functions are.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was in the house that day. He did not stir from his slumped position or even acknowledge that he had heard the question. I have no personal complaint about that, Mr. Speaker, but other people do have an interest in it. The question was posed to the right hon. gentleman because a number of native Indian people had asked me about the responsibilities of the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Andras) and I was unable to answer. I acted partially as a representative of native Indian people who were concerned about this, and I got no response.

The hon. member for Port Arthur, wherever he spoke last fall left the impression with the Indian native people that he was concerned about the plight of these people. On many occasions he condemned the past failings of governments in their dealings with Indian people. He indicated that he had an insight into the problems of our native Indian people. As I said, he left a good impression.

When the announcement was made in this house regarding the reorganization of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development the member for Port Arthur, the Minister without Portfolio, complained bitterly and publicly that he had not been consulted about that reorganization; that he had no knowledge of it and that he had doubts about its values as far as the Indian people were concerned. That was the first time we got any indication that perhaps the hon. member for Port Arthur did not really hold a responsible, authoritative position in the government.

The Prime Minister stated, when asked, that the hon. member for Port Arthur did not have any responsibility in so far as this department was concerned. It was this, plus other comments and the fact that the hon. member's involvement in northern affairs has declined in recent times, that has led many Indian people to wonder just what is happening. The Indian people wonder whether one of the ministers is a propagandist while the other who has the responsibility for doing something about the affairs of the Indian people so far has done relatively little.

As I have stated I do not mind that the Prime Minister chose not to give a reply to my question. This is one of the chances we take in this house. I do not feel slighted by it. If it is the Prime Minister's desire to ignore any member, he can do it. He has done it on a number of occasions.

• (10:10 p.m.)

But I submit that the Prime Minister of all people has no right to ignore, as he did, and in effect by ignoring thus insult the very people whom government has ignored for many years, our native Indian people. As I said earlier, the Prime Minister did not bestir himself, but if he had made some comment or recognition of the fact that it was necessary to outline the responsibilities of the hon. member for Port Arthur, when the question was asked on February 19, then the Parliamentary Secretary or whoever it is who is going to reply this evening would not have