

Oral Questions

● (1140)

[English]

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS**CN EXPRESS OFFICES—PROPOSED MEETING OF PRESIDENT WITH MINISTER**

Mr. Mel Gass (Malpeque): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. During the course of questioning at yesterday's Standing Committee on Transport, CN President Dr. R. A. Bandeden informed committee members that he had proposals for the transport minister regarding the retention of CN Express offices in Charlottetown and other maritime centres. He advised me that he will be requesting a meeting with the Minister of Transport some day next week to present his proposals for the minister's consideration. In view of the urgency of the situation, that being that some CN employees have already received their notices of lay-off, will the minister assure this House that he will do everything possible to allow Dr. Bandeden to meet and present his proposals for the maintenance of CN Express offices in Charlottetown and other maritime centres?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has described the situation very well. Dr. Bandeden is going to tell me the results of his review of that situation next week. Obviously I will react to that. There is something I want to mention which is rather important. A notice of lay-off is a procedural matter which is necessary in order that an employee can take advantage of the relocation, retraining or pre-pensioning system which is part of the retrenchment operations of CN Express. The hon. member should bear that in mind. Something else to bear in mind is that when a person loses his employment with CN Express, and I have proof of this, he often finds his way into working with another company which had rivalled CN Express in the past. Consequently some jobs are moving. They are not being lost to the area as a whole.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gass: At the meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport on December 18, a motion was moved, voted on and agreed to that "CN Railways continue the CN Express service at the minimum of the 1979 level". I am sure the minister is aware of this resolution. Did the minister consider this and will it be discussed with Dr. Bandeden next week?

Mr. Pepin: That is part of the present exercise. The recommendation was that a review should be made and a review is now taking place. The results will be announced next week.

INDIAN AFFAIRS**ASSISTANCE TO DEAL WITH OCCURRENCE OF DISASTERS ON RESERVES**

Mr. Lorne Greenaway (Cariboo-Chilcotin): Madam Speaker, my question concerns natural disasters which might occur on Indian reservations and is directed to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Does the department have a policy whereby, in the event of a catastrophe such as a serious flood on a reservation, departmental members will help the Indians?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Yes, Madam Speaker. When there are catastrophes of that nature, the department tries to respond as constructively as possible with financial and other resources.

Mr. Greenaway: Madam Speaker, what I was getting at was whether the department has a special team. A disaster occurred in my constituency several weeks ago and no one appeared for ten days. Are Indian people able to get funding from the federal-provincial funds allocated for these disasters? As the minister knows, they live in a sort of no man's land situation.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, that is somewhat of a hypothetical question inasmuch as the Indians, to my knowledge, have not chosen to go that route. What they have done is communicate a problem which has all the earmarks of a catastrophe of the nature the hon. member is talking about. They should immediately communicate with our regional director-general. I know of examples where he has endeavoured to respond with financial resources and personnel, though perhaps not personnel direct from the department. They may contract people who have the competence, depending on the nature of the catastrophe, to respond in the most effective way possible.

As for the particular case the hon. member talks of in his constituency, he has not informed me, at least orally, about the situation. I will be pleased to look into the matter and will in fact do so.

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[Translation]

NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS**INQUIRY WHETHER NEW POLICY WILL BE ANNOUNCED**

Mr. Herb Breau (Gloucester): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

With a view to seconding the support from thousands of Canadians directly involved in international development and co-operation, to maintaining their support for the government initiative in the North-South dialogue, could the Right Hon. Prime Minister tell the House, in light of the two reports which were tabled in the House in July and December by the