

Oral Questions

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): As to the argumentative aspect of the question, I may say I have heard at least three premiers from the Atlantic provinces concede there have been substantial benefits from DREE. But setting this aside, I shall be meeting with Premier Hatfield next week; my anticipation is that I shall be having a fourth meeting with Premier Moores this weekend and be seeing the other two within the next two weeks to do exactly what the hon. member has suggested.

Mr. McGrath: A further supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for St. John's East, try to complete the first round of questioning, and then return to this subject later.

• (1450)

Mr. McGrath: Would the minister agree to stepping up the plan of the government to meet with the premiers of the four Atlantic provinces on the subject of freight rates and their impact on development and the cost of living in the region, and would he use this occasion to discuss a new strategy for the area as has been recommended by the Atlantic Development Council and the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council?

Mr. Jamieson: Mr. Speaker, on the matter of freight rates in isolation, and I concede they cannot be considered in isolation, I believe that my colleague the Minister of Transport has initiated such talks. I have also been discussing transportation as it relates to regional economic expansion. The ultimate conclusions that will be drawn I think will involve both incentives and some form of change in transportation subsidies and the like, so the two do go together, yes.

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INDIAN AFFAIRS**ABORIGINAL RIGHTS—REQUEST THAT MINISTER APPEAR BEFORE COMMITTEE TO EXPLAIN GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and I do so because we invariably get straight answers from him. As a result of the statements, whatever they were, that he and the Prime Minister made yesterday, I should like to ask whether the minister would be prepared to appear before the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development, which is currently examining the annual report, and lay out there in great detail the decision and the position of the government in respect of negotiating the question of land claims, aboriginal claims, native rights claims and the like?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I would be very happy to appear before my committee whenever I am called to be there.

[Mr. McGrath.]

Mr. Howard: That being the case, Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the minister would be prepared to explain to the committee the position of the government in respect of negotiating the claims by the Nishga tribal council?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, every member of the House knows that I am like an open book when I am before the committee.

Mr. Hees: Sometimes too open, Jean.

Mr. Howard: It may well be that he is like an open book, Mr. Speaker, but probably one filled with blank pages. I apologize now for prefacing my original question by saying we usually get straight answers from the minister. I should have known better. He has been influenced too much by the right hon. Prime Minister.

An hon. Member: That will teach you.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am not sure whether the hon. member has a supplementary question, but if he has he might ask it now.

Mr. Howard: Yes, I have, Mr. Speaker. In view of all the generosity displayed by the minister, I wonder whether he would be prepared to outline the government's position in respect of negotiating with the various Indian and Eskimo people their aboriginal rights and land claims specifically from the point of view of guaranteeing that whatever position the government has taken regarding the Indians of the Yukon will not be the basis of a settlement to be crammed down the throats of the rest of these people?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I will answer the question asked by the hon. member at the committee.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS—ESTABLISHMENT OF NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the minister. Since the committee passed a unanimous resolution this morning that will be reported to the House calling for the setting up of a negotiating committee as recommended by the brief of the Yukon Native Brotherhood presented yesterday, which the Prime Minister endorsed in principle, can he give us any idea when it is his intention to set up that committee since the standing committee recommended this be done before March 31?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I cannot give any specific date today but I will move as quickly as possible.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT**QUEBEC—GENDRON COMMISSION REPORT—CONSULTATION WITH FEDERAL AUTHORITIES**

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Prime Minister.