

Oral Questions

with regard to the meeting I had with Mr. Pym in December. I am prepared to break this rule if the House forces me to, as was the case with respect to my discussion with Mrs. Thatcher. I do not think it is proper. I think that if the British government had any doubts about the course of action we are taking, they would have told us that they would not pass the resolution if it contained this, that or the next thing, but that they would pass it if it contained something else. I personally do not think that would be a proper attitude for the British government.

● (1430)

That is also the way that the present British Prime Minister thinks and the previous British prime minister thought, and that is why it seems to me that, so far as we are concerned, the matter is now settled. The British have told us that they would receive a request from the Canadian Parliament and that they would act on it; that if the package contained certain things, it would take a little more time. But there was never any question that they would look through the resolution to see if it was well founded, justified or acceptable to them.

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NATIVE RIGHTS**AGREEMENT WITH COMMITTEE FOR ORIGINAL PEOPLES ENTITLEMENT—GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. On October 31, 1978, the government signed an agreement with the Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement to settle Inuvialuit land claims. In the January 16, 1981, edition of *News of the North*, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is quoted as having stated in a letter of December 24 to the federal government's chief negotiator that:

—some parts of the agreement-in-principle, signed between the Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement (COPE) and the government, are not acceptable to cabinet and must be changed before a final agreement can be reached.

It seems that this government intends to repeat—

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Manly: —the awful mistakes of the past. Does the government intend to honour the agreement with COPE of October 31, 1978, and has any agreement been reached by cabinet to renege on the provisions of the agreement?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I apologize but, not having been briefed on this question, I do not have the answer. However, I will be happy to transmit the question to the minister, who is on his way back from his home in Hamilton.

Mr. Manly: Surely, Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister would be aware of the decisions which had been reached in cabinet on that question.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what priority he and his cabinet colleagues place on the settlement of land claims, and could he tell us how the Government of Canada can expect to negotiate and settle the other outstanding land claims in the territories if they renege on the only agreement that they have reached thus far?

Mr. Trudeau: The hon. member asks how intent we are on solving this problem. I think the intent is clear from the indication given by the Minister of Justice on Friday before the parliamentary committee that he would be prepared to entrench aboriginal rights. We are therefore giving the guarantee that it is our intention that these matters be settled, we hope by political negotiation or, if not, by the courts.

Mr. Manly: We certainly hope that the commitment to entrench aboriginal rights will not be taken away by any amending formula, Madam Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Manly: On Friday, the hon. member for Cariboo-Chilcotin raised the question of the James Bay agreement and the renegeing by the governments with regard to the health care provisions. I ask the Prime Minister: Is the federal government prepared to stand by the James Bay agreement and to respect article 14 of that agreement to ensure that the James Bay Cree have adequate health care?

Mr. Trudeau: I do not have article 14 at hand right now, therefore I cannot give a precise answer, but I can assure the hon. member that our government played a large part in the negotiation of the James Bay settlement. The then minister of Indian affairs and northern development, who is now Minister of Justice, had a hand in it and had one of his special assistants sit in at the negotiations on his behalf. Therefore, I can only say that what we have negotiated was successful and we intend to see that the undertakings are carried out.

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THE CONSTITUTION**PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS WITH BRITISH MINISTER**

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Durham-Northumberland): Madam Speaker, I am sure that the Prime Minister must appreciate that, with the lack of candour to which he referred earlier—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lawrence: —and in respect of the one-sided version of what actually went on in the past, we have not been informed of all that took place. I should like to get back to the meeting which the Prime Minister had with the British minister, the Right Hon. Francis Pym, on December 19, along with other ministers of the Canadian cabinet. I should like to ask the Right Hon. Prime Minister whether Mr. Pym informed any minister of the Canadian government that it was only on October 6 of last year that the British Prime Minister, Prime