

pherds outside Bethlehem hearing the good news of peace on earth, and so completely contrary to Christ's commandment of love and his own disarmed death on the cross, that Canada must, in the name of life and the future, and in defiance of the powers of death which surround us, say an unambiguous no to participating in the nuclear arms race. That would be an act truly in the spirit of Christmas.

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### THE CENSUS

#### DECLINE IN BIRTH RATE

**Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic):** Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada warns that the fertility rate of Canadians has dropped to an all-time low. On average each Canadian woman bears 1.7 children in her lifetime, significantly below the break-even rate of 2.1 needed to maintain a steady population. If this trend continues, not only will our population decline unless made up by massive immigration, but also the average age will increase, thereby putting strain on social security systems as fewer people in the workforce are called upon to support more and more pensioners.

Canada is severely underpopulated, with tremendous resources left unutilized, and millions of acres of land that has yet to see the plough. Therefore, Sir, it ought to be a public policy to encourage families to have more children. In that the process involved is not unduly distasteful, might I suggest that we could all start with renewed vigour this Christmas.

On a serious note, Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is this. If we do not populate our own country, most of which is largely uninhabited, someone else eventually will do it for us.

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### ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

#### YUKON INDIAN CLAIMS—EXTENSION OF NEGOTIATIONS URGED

**Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Crombie) informed Yukon Indian people that the Government lacks the political will to settle their aboriginal claims fairly and justly. While much progress has been made towards a settlement, several recent historical events have significantly affected the settlement process. The Minister himself has recognized the importance of these new factors, some created by him, such as his decision to undertake a full-scale review of native claims policy. Despite his earlier flexibility and apparent willingness to accommodate these factors, his decision of yesterday denies Yukon Indian people the time and resources they need to assess these events properly.

Why has the Minister abandoned his earlier flexibility? From where has the pressure come causing him to take a harder line? It is unfair, unreasonable, and unacceptable for him to insist that the Yukon Indian people must make such a

### Oral Questions

momentous decision in haste. This is not just one more small item on the Government's agenda. The future of an entire group of people is at stake.

I therefore call upon the Minister not to foreclose on these negotiations. Do not walk away from the table. Allow them the needed funding, since it is an advance on the Yukon settlement anyway, and let the legitimate concerns of the Yukon Indian communities and their leaders be much more carefully considered.

● (1115)

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

### SOCIAL SECURITY

#### GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, if you would allow me to trespass gently upon the rules, I would like to wish you and your bride, the Prime Minister and his family, and all Members of the House a merry Christmas and happy holiday. I would also like to wish the House a productive new year.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** It is in this benign spirit that I say that I am pleased that the Prime Minister and the Government are allowing a debate, beginning in an hour from now, which I will be leading, on our social security programs.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister a question which reflects the one point of unanimity which he and his two principal Ministers in this debate, the Minister of National Health and Welfare and the Minister of Finance have reached. They are talking about taking from the existing social programs for the needy. That position contradicts the Prime Minister's statement made before the Canadian and Empire Clubs on October 28 when he said that "we will achieve these objectives without touching our existing social programs". There seems to be a contradiction between the unanimity achieved among the Prime Minister and his two Ministers and what the Prime Minister said in Toronto. Would he explain that contradiction?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, in the same spirit of kindness, which I acknowledge with thanks, in a very special way I want to wish my right hon. friend a long and productive career as Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. I would like to tell him what I think a lot of Members realize, that he has, in a very real way, notwithstanding the events of the last few days, contributed substantially to creating a new atmosphere of reasonableness and civility. I think all Members of the House of Commons would want to applaud him on his leadership.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!