

Oral Questions

I want to ask the Minister about a matter of grave concern to railway employees, municipalities, and citizens across the country, the attempt of the railways to obtain authority to operate trains without cabooses, which poses a threat to employees' safety, working conditions, and the public safety. Since the CTC is holding a hearing on December 3 regarding the safety of the test train itself, and in view of the Minister's demand—

Mr. Speaker: Does the Hon. Member have a question? Please.

Mr. Benjamin: In view of the Minister's demand for hearings in nine locations, I would like to ask him whether the CTC has responded adequately. If not, will he order it to hold hearings in those nine locations at dates late enough for groups to prepare their submissions?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for his kind remarks. I, too, look forward to working with him in implementing the policies and addressing the challenges of transportation in our country.

Mr. Benjamin: Like re-instating the Crow rate?

Mr. Mazankowski: I will answer that at a later date.

In answer to the Hon. Member's question, it is true that I expressed concern about the lack of adequate hearings before the testing has occurred. I have suggested to the CTC, as have other Members, that further pre-test hearings be held across the country. I am informed by the CTC that the additional hearings will be held in addition to Ottawa, in the cities of Moncton, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. I think those will be announced sometime next week.

DEMONSTRATION TRAINS

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, I hope the Minister will order it to do that at the nine locations that he has suggested.

Will he also require the railroads to cease holding public viewings of the demonstration trains at 33 locations across Canada before the test hearings are even held?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly concerned about the matter of the pre-test hearings. I think the CTC has adequately addressed that. If the Hon. Member has additional locations that he would propose, I would certainly be pleased to entertain that representation. Perhaps he could make the representation to the CTC himself. I think the CTC has recognized the need for the additional pre-test hearings and that it is fair to say there has been a reasonable compromise reached.

CONFEDERATION

ABSENCE OF TERRITORIAL LEADERS FROM FIRST MINISTERS' MEETING

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. I understand that the Prime Minister was very satisfied with yesterday's meeting to plan a national agenda for next year's economic conference. In view of the fact that the Speech from the Throne talks about concern for regional isolation, will the Prime Minister tell the House why he neglected to invite the two leaders of the territorial Governments, the Hon. Mr. Pearson of Yukon and the Hon. Mr. Nerysoo of the Northwest Territories? I do not need to remind the Prime Minister that these two leaders were present at the last two constitutional conferences. Why were they not at this meeting with the Prime Minister yesterday?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it was an agenda-setting exercise yesterday involving the First Ministers of the provinces. I hope at our Regina meeting there will be a fair representation from the North.

REQUEST FOR COMMITMENT ON FUTURE ATTENDANCE

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Do I understand from the Prime Minister's answer that this is a commitment which he has made today, that the two territorial leaders will be at the economic conference next year? Is that correct?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker, it is not a commitment. It is a suggestion that I have taken the liberty of putting in writing today to my provincial colleagues for their consideration. I believe it would be appropriate.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

MARITIME COMMAND—RESTORATION OF NAVY BLUE UNIFORMS

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Defence. The Minister, like all Canadians, is aware of the grave need to equip our Canadian forces properly, but he must face the reality of an empty public purse. Nonetheless, I understand the Minister will proceed to restore navy blue uniforms to Maritime Command, something his Liberal predecessors refused to do. Will the Minister advise the House whether he has formulated a plan to provide navy blue uniforms for Canada's Navy, and when can we expect that plan to be implemented—hopefully in time for the 75th anniversary of Canada's Navy?

Hon. Robert C. Coates (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!