Inquiries of the Ministry

not see her in the house at the moment, so possibly it might be taken as notice.

In view of the public concern at this time about the alleged shortage of Canadian content in broadcasting, would the Secretary of State arrange for an early meeting of the committee on broadcasting, films and assistance to the arts so this matter can be considered?

CRIMINAL CODE
INQUIRY AS TO AMENDMENT RESPECTING SOCIAL MATTERS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Since there appears to be some confusion about when the government will be dealing with the subject of abortion, can the minister advise the house whether the government will refer to a standing committee of the house at an early date the two private members' bills and other views on this subject?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Would my hon. friend permit me to answer that question tomorrow? I think we will be discussing the matter in cabinet tomorrow morning.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister is answering that question would he indicate to the house at what point in this session we might be dealing with other social matters such as divorce, birth control and capital punishment?

Mr. Pearson: I think perhaps it would be more useful if the house leader would get in touch with the house leaders of the other parties in an effort to work out a timetable for this session within the limits of unpredictability.

HOUSE OF COMMONS
REQUEST FOR PRESENCE OF MINISTERS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

On the orders of the day:

Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. I should like to preface it by noting that seven or eight ministers who hold major portfolios are absent on this opening day. Would the Prime Minister make an effort to have his ministers here during this first week of the adjourned session so that they

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will be able to answer questions which have arisen during the recess?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated that all the ministers who are not here are away on important public business, with the exception of one who is ill. It would be of help if ministers could be given notice by members of any questions they wish to ask if they are indeed important ones.

INDIAN AFFAIRS
INQUIRY AS TO ESTABLISHMENT OF CLAIMS COMMISSION

On the orders of the day:

Mr. W. H. A. Thomas (Middlesex West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Is he now in a position to inform the house when the long-awaited Indian claims commission will be set up?

Hon. Arthur Laing (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, the situation in respect of the Indian claims commission is the same as it was when the house rose for the summer vacation. Representations are still being made to us by the Indians of British Columbia that it not be introduced until they have been given an opportunity to discuss the British Columbia land question. I have again advised them that we cannot wait much longer and that I expect we will have to introduce the bill at least by next spring.

Hon. R. A. Bell (Carleton): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister be in a position to introduce the revised Indian Act at this session of parliament?

Mr. Laing: Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of priority. If the matters of first priority are dealt with quickly I think it is quite possible that the Indian Act could be dealt with. At the present time it is being discussed by my officials with representatives of the Indian Advisory Board of Canada.

Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West): Can the minister advise the house whether he would consider setting a deadline for the Indians of British Columbia to complete their representations so that the Indian claims commission could be set up?

Mr. Laing: Mr. Speaker, anything I have said to the Indians of British Columbia would make that quite possible.