

*Inquiries of the Ministry***CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS****GREAT SLAVE LAKE LINE—ACTION TO ESTABLISH  
INQUIRY INTO CONTRACTORS' CLAIMS**

**Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport. Can he say whether or not action has been taken on the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Transport to establish an investigation or inquiry into the claims of contractors against the CNR with regard to the construction of the Great Slave Lake Railway?

**Mr. Gérard Duquet (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to look into this matter and take it up with the minister and then send an answer directly to the hon. member.

**Mr. Speaker:** Orders of the day.

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**HOUSE OF COMMONS****ATTENDANCE OF MINISTERS UNDER ROSTER SYSTEM**

**Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise a question of privilege at this time concerning the attendance of ministers of the Crown in this House. I do not raise it with any particular malice against any minister of the Crown, but I bring it up because this is the start of a new session and we in the opposition who wish to ask questions consider it important that ministers be present.

I direct my remarks to the right hon. Prime Minister and remind him that of the 20 ministers who are supposed to be present today five are absent, or some 25 per cent. I hope that during this new session we will be able to have a full complement of those ministers who are supposed to be here. I wish to emphasize that I am not in sympathy with the roster system for the attendance of ministers, but I will accept it provided they are in attendance when they are scheduled to be present.

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, at the outset of the session I am glad to try to clarify the position. I think the hon. member has made a valid point. If we are to expect the roster system to operate at all it is important that the ministers be here. But I must bring to the attention of the House that there are some occasions, as is the case today, where there may be three ministers absent. There are 16 ministers here. The three ministers absent, who should be here according to the roster system, are away from Ottawa, one at the United Nations, another one in the United Kingdom, and the third in Europe on government business. In cases such as this it is expected that the Acting Minister, if there is one, or the Parliamentary Secretary, if there is one, will answer questions directed to a minister. But of course there is no provision for anyone to answer questions when a minister is not expected to be here, which is the case with the housing minister to whom a question was directed a moment ago.

[Mr. Rowland.]

[Later:]

**Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the new House Leader. In view of the fact that the right hon. Prime Minister has today indicated that when a minister is not due in the House according to the roster system no acting minister is appointed to answer questions, and in view of the fact that this was the case last year, can he indicate the reason for this downgrading of Parliament just one step further?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**PROVISION FOR CONTINUING SPEAKER**

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might direct a question to the right hon. Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister giving consideration to the making of arrangements for discussions amongst all parties, either through the party leaders or other representatives, as to the possibility of making provision for a continuing Speaker for the House of Commons, especially in view of the fact that at the present time we have one who enjoys the confidence of the entire House?

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

**Mr. Speaker:** I am not sure that this is a matter of urgency. Perhaps the hon. member might consider putting the question on the order paper.

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** May I ask, Mr. Speaker, that this question be taken as notice by yourself.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that this is something in which Your Honour should not be involved, I wonder if the Prime Minister would perhaps take notice of my question. Would he consider arranging for discussions among the representatives of the parties on what I believe is an important issue so far as this House of Commons is concerned?

**Mr. Speaker:** Orders of the day.

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**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE****CONSIDERATION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY**

The House resumed, from Tuesday, October 13, consideration of the motion of Mr. Jacques-L. Trudel for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session, and the amendment thereto of Mr. Stanfield (p. 29).

[Translation]

**Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, my first remarks should be to congratulate the mover of the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, the hon. member for Bourassa (Mr. Trudel).