

meet—of providing a forum in the constitutional change process for the direct presentation of views by the people of the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and the native peoples, as opposed to working simply and exclusively through the federal government?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the New Democratic Party will undoubtedly recall that in February 1979 we, the federal government, had put on the agenda of the constitutional conference an item along the lines the hon. member referred to, that is, we had suggested that Indian and Inuit spokesmen present briefs directly to the constitutional assembly. On that latter point we do not differ.

As to the participation of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, I repeat what I said about the position I took last week and the week before. Those, are in a sense, different levels of government. I remind the House that many times we receive representations from mayors and municipalities, which also represent another level of government, and that those representatives also wanted to take part in the constitutional talks.

With regard to those two categories—other levels of government—I shall be very happy to raise the matter with the premiers. I do not promise that it will be done on Monday. I remind the House that the matter of broadening the debate through increased participation was discussed between the leader of the New Democratic Party and myself and that I even suggested to him that at one point we might be moving toward such a solution. But I do not think that at this stage I must invite representatives of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories to attend this conference, unless the premiers and I decide to broaden the participation.

[*English*]

Mr. Broadbent: A further supplementary question. I certainly hope, Madam Speaker, that the Prime Minister is successful in what I take to be his undertaking to try to get a commitment from the premiers to widen participation.

My final question to the Prime Minister is this. Considering the need for speedy constitutional change, does he consider that as an outside date it would be desirable for us, as a Parliament, to agree that we should have a new constitution established in Canada by July 1, 1981?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party probably noticed that this side of the House gave support to his earlier motion to that effect. I would only want to modify it. While I would first welcome that rapid date—that deadline set by the New Democratic Party—and say that we are indeed grateful that at least our two parties are of the view it is that urgent, all I would add—I told the hon. Leader of the Opposition this yesterday in our talks—is that if we can do it sooner, in total or in part, that would be our preference. We on this side feel there is a great deal of urgency for a variety of reasons.

Oral Questions

COMMUNICATIONS

EARTH STATION ON GROUNDS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA LEGISLATURE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Communications. He will know that, despite his blandishments on Tuesday, the licence given to the British Columbia government for the earth station located on the lawn of the B.C. legislature does not confer the right to receive American programs from American satellites and that, despite that fact, the British Columbia government is currently receiving signals from American satellites.

Does the minister accept the argument made by the British Columbia government that the earth station on the lawn of their legislature is not covered by federal legislation? If he does not accept that argument, what action does he propose to take?

Hon. Francis Fox (Secretary of State and Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, on this question I should like to point out two things to the hon. member. First of all, as far as the legality or illegality of the earth receiving station is concerned, I have asked for a full report and advice from the legal officers of my department.

I believe, Madam Speaker, that this goes beyond the question of legality or illegality. As far as I am concerned, an undertaking was given to this government by the government of British Columbia—particularly, by its minister responsible for science, universities and communications—to the effect that the satellite would be used exclusively to receive CBC commercial signals. This undertaking has not been followed by that government. In that sense I find it extremely disturbing that a minister of the Crown of a provincial government would put himself in the position of not living up to his word.

● (1430)

I would like to point out that we have some ten to twelve ongoing possible projects with the B.C. government, in particular with that minister, and I would like to know whether or not this government can count on that minister living up to his word.

Mr. Andre: Take him into the constitutional talks, too.

Mr. Beatty: Madam Speaker, I want to ask the minister a very direct question. Is he threatening the B.C. government at the present time that if, in the opinion of the Minister of Communications of the federal government, the B.C. government does not live up to what he believes is an undertaking that it made, the federal government will not participate in these other joint agreements with the B.C. government?

Further, on Tuesday the minister went out of his way to studiously avoid giving the assurance to Canadians living in northern, remote and rural areas that prosecutions would not be launched against them because they have set up earth stations to give themselves the same freedom of choice in programming as is freely available to Canadians living in