

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Kempling:** I ask the minister to assist the small business community in view of the large number of people it employs. He knows, I know and everyone knows that the largest percentage of employment in the country is in the small business sector, which will be very severely hurt by these interest rate increases if they continue at this level. Will the minister consider reducing the income tax rate for small business to offset the interest rate charged by the banks?

● (1125)

[Translation]

**Mr. Bussières:** Madam Speaker, small businesses can already avail themselves of several programs which are administered by my colleague, the Minister of State for Small Businesses. The hon. member mentioned one, the Small Business Development Bond program which allows extremely generous rates of interest on certain loans. Many provisions of the Income Tax Act are also of special benefit to small businesses. The fact, for instance, that the Minister of Finance agreed to keep indexation also means that small businesses can keep more money in their pockets come income tax return time.

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[English]

### THE CONSTITUTION

#### PROPOSED RESOLUTION—REQUEST BY NATIVE LEADERS TO MEET PRIME MINISTER

**Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. On previous occasions I have raised with the Prime Minister the need for him to meet with Indian, Metis and Inuit leaders to discuss the current constitutional resolution now before Parliament. In my hand I have a copy of a letter dated November 17, 1980. It is a joint letter from the three leaders of the national organizations asking to meet with the Prime Minister to discuss this resolution. In spite of the government's haste to rush the resolution through Parliament, this letter has not been answered, nor have the requests of the native leaders to meet with the Prime Minister been granted.

Has the Prime Minister received the letter? Is he willing to meet in the near future, with the leaders of the Indian, Metis and Inuit peoples to work out acceptable amendments to the constitutional resolution?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows that the proposed constitution is being discussed by a joint committee of this House and the other place. I am informed that ten days ago members of that committee agreed to meet with the Indian representatives. As far as our members on that committee are concerned, they are prepared to meet with the representatives as early as Monday morning, afternoon or evening. I understand there are negotiations going on as to whether that date will be kept; I do not know if it will be, as it is in the hands of the committee.

Our members are prepared to meet them Monday morning, as I have indicated.

**Mr. Manly:** Madam Speaker, the leaders of these organizations would very much like to meet with the Prime Minister to find out what kind of amendments would be acceptable to him and his government before they appear before the committee. The Prime Minister has stated that, if language rights are not entrenched now they never will be because of the difficulty of getting the provinces to agree to them. He has told native leaders it will be easier for them to get their rights after the constitution is entrenched and patriated than before. Why does the Prime Minister have a double standard with respect to this matter? Does he think native rights are not as important as language rights?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows, as I have said before in the House a few times, that I did meet with the Indian chiefs and elders. In that meeting a few months ago I spoke to them at great length about our position on the constitution and our desire to meet with them and to discuss with them any constitutional matters in which they are directly involved. Since I made that speech meetings have taken place with both officials and the minister responsible for Indian affairs. The matter is now before a committee of this House. Surely that is the place for the Indians, like other groups in this country, to present their views and to seek amendments. I am relying upon the members of that committee to see if these amendments can be accepted with some consensus among all parties and, hopefully, many of the provinces as well. I must await the report of the committee in order to see their views on that.

I think the hon. member is misstating the case in so far as the comparison between language rights and native rights is concerned. Language rights have been agreed to by the ten provinces in meetings they had in St. Andrews in 1977 and in Montreal in 1978. A clear policy on minority language rights and the field of education was announced, and it is that policy which we are putting into the constitution.

● (1130)

Such is not the case with native rights. There are some very general requests to entrench aboriginal rights, but as I said in this House just a few days ago, aboriginal rights are undefined. Nor is it defined as to whom these rights would apply—to how many groups of Indians or aboriginal peoples, to what extent the rights would apply to the Metis, and what is an Indian, a half Indian or a three-quarter Indian.

The House of Commons, Parliament and the joint committee will have to look into these questions, and when the native requests are very clearly put and the content is known, then it will be up to the House to take the responsibility to determine whether or not there should be an entrenchment at that time.

**Mr. Manly:** Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that he met earlier in the year with native leaders, but the result of that meeting is that there were absolutely no guarantees of their rights given whatsoever. The Prime Minister