

Inquiries of the Ministry

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister arising out of the presentation of a petition on behalf of 60 per cent—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have to interrupt the hon. member.

[Translation]

Is the hon. member for Abitibi rising on a question of privilege?

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I requested permission to ask a supplementary question to that of my colleague from Charlevoix on the James Bay hydroelectric project and as this project will be carried out in my riding, I suggest that I have a right to this information.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall be happy to recognize the hon. member in a moment. For the time being, the Chair has recognized the hon. member for Yukon. As soon as we have disposed of the hon. member's question and the supplementaries that may be asked, I shall be happy to get back to the previous question and to recognize the hon. member for Abitibi.

* * *

[English]

NORTHERN AFFAIRS**YUKON TERRITORY—GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITION REQUESTING DISSOLUTION OF COUNCIL AND ELECTION**

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister arising out of the presentation to the Governor General last Monday of a petition signed by 60 per cent of those eligible to vote in the last federal election in the Yukon asking for dissolution of the present session of the Yukon Territorial Council and the holding of immediate elections. Have the Acting Prime Minister and the government considered that petition and, if so, what action does the government intend to take?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): To my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, the matter has not yet been discussed by the government.

Mr. Nielsen: I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Since under the provisions of the Yukon Act the Governor in Council has the power to dissolve the council and instruct that new elections be called, is it his intention to advise his colleagues in the Privy Council to follow the request made by 60 per cent of the eligible voters in the Yukon, dissolve the council and call a new election?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I have not received officially a request signed by Yukon citizens, but may I be allowed to say at this time that The Yukon Territory Act provides for elections every four years. If the majority of

the inhabitants of the Yukon are displeased with the elected candidates they can do what all voters do in a democracy: that is, change elected representatives in the next election.

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that 60 per cent of the eligible voters can hardly be called a minority. In the copy of the letter that I received from Democracy for Yukoners it is indicated that not only the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition but also the minister himself received a copy of the petition. I wonder whether he would make inquiries of his officials forthwith and advise the House, perhaps tomorrow, of what action he intends to take?

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I am very much surprised that the Yukon delegation did not go to the trouble of meeting me. I was not even asked to meet them. I therefore have a feeling there is more interest in playing politics than in being serious.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Abitibi on a supplementary to the question put a moment ago.

* * *

INDIAN AFFAIRS**JAMES BAY HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT—EFFECTS OF WORK AT GRANDE-RIVIÈRE ON NATIVES**

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I should not like to retain a bad impression because of the reply the hon. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development gave a little while ago, when he said that the Grande-Rivière project, which was announced last night by the Premier of Quebec, would involve only one third of the Indians of the area.

Did the hon. minister mean that this one-third of the Indians of the northern part of the James Bay basin is less important than the two-thirds of the Indians of the southern part?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): No, Mr. Speaker, that third is not less important, but nevertheless it is easier to deal with one-third of the Indian population of that area than with 6,000 Indians. It is my intention to protect those 2,000 Indians, just as I intended to protect the 6,000.

* * *

[English]

POST OFFICE**REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON PROGRESS OF CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS WITH UNIONS**

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board and arises out of the information conveyed to the House by the hon. member for Vegreville with respect to the deteriorating postal situation in Alberta and the negative response