

technicalities, at least in the context of the death of our country, such as the ownership of the Canadian National Railways in Quebec, the St. Lawrence Seaway and the division of the national debt. Will the Acting Prime Minister tell the House whether this speech represented contingency plans for separation being made by the government and whether there are any plans of this nature being formulated by the government?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would immediately want to correct any impression I may have created that I had denounced Mr. Robertson's speech. I tried to make it clear that Mr. Robertson was speaking as an individual Canadian and I think his speech was an impressive contribution to the debate on national unity.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: And it was not government policy?

Mr. MacEachen: The speech could be read with profit by all. That is the context in which we ought to regard the speech and we should not conclude from it that these are government plans or that it is an indirect way of indicating government policy. Mr. Robertson is one of the most knowledgeable and experienced men in this field, and it is excellent that he should have spoken out and given us his views on this question at this particular time.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, the Acting Prime Minister did not answer the question I asked, namely, whether the government is preparing contingency plans for separation, which is the issue we are considering, and whether in his speech Mr. Robertson indicated that those plans are either in existence or being formulated by the government. Sir, the speech also discussed the notion that the federal government might be willing to ensure that those people living in regions where a majority voted against separation could remain inside the union. Will the Acting Prime Minister tell the House whether this policy will apply to other parts of Quebec, such as the Gaspé or Montreal, or what is the government's policy in that respect, if it has any policy?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, first, there are no contingency plans. That ought to be made perfectly clear, and in so saying I am answering the question the hon. member asked. The answer is, no.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): What about the answer to my second question?

POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING THIRD ORGANIZATION CONCERNED WITH UNITY

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Acting Prime Minister? We now have two bureaucracies dealing with national unity, and a short time ago the Prime Minister promised a third which seems to be a vehicle for recycling Jean-Luc Pepin. In view of the obvious confusion which surrounds the roles of the various unity agencies being set up by the govern-

ment, will the Acting Prime Minister tell the House whether there are now any definite plans to establish the third unity organization to which the Prime Minister referred?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am not clear what the hon. member means by a "third unity organization". It is unknown to me. I would say, in reply to the hon. member, that I hope at an early date to arrange a debate in the House of Commons on the question of national unity, and I believe that would be a good occasion to explore all the options the hon. member has in mind.

Mr. Paproski: Can we expect that debate before 1978?

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NORTHERN AFFAIRS

ALLEGED CONFLICT BETWEEN QUEBEC LANGUAGE CHARTER AND JAMES BAY AGREEMENT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I understand, from the Acting Prime Minister's answer, that the government will set up no further national unity organizations. May I direct my supplementary question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development? Mr. Robertson, in the speech referred to by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton, also raised the question of the rights of native people in northern Quebec. Last week the minister said he would be examining Bill 1 of the province of Quebec with a view to ascertaining its impact on native rights in general and the James Bay Agreement, Bill C-9, in particular. Is he now prepared to tell this House what is the legal opinion or whether he intends to take any steps to further test the constitutionality of this legislation?

● (1120)

Hon. Warren Allmand (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I have not yet received the legal opinion on Bill 1, but I have had discussions with the chief in charge of the Quebec Indian Association. He has confirmed to me his opposition to Bill 1. That is Chief Andrew Delisle. I received from Chief Billy Diamond his exact words on this question in which he states that he cannot accept any legislation in Quebec which would be contrary to his rights under the Indian Act or the James Bay settlement. I intend to support him on that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Will the minister undertake to the House to have that legal opinion brought forward before the statute of limitation expires? Also, will he tell us precisely when he expects to be able to report to the House in so far as the legal opinion is concerned and whether the government is going to take any action to test the constitutionality of Bill 1 by reference to the courts rather than giving us reports as to whom he has spoken outside of the legal side of things.