

raid on provincial and municipal treasuries of western, northern and Atlantic provinces?

● (1500)

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, let me note first of all that this has nothing to do with the federal policing program. There are over 10,000 members of the force across the country, including those in British Columbia, who are paid for and will continue to be paid for 100 per cent by the federal taxpayers of the nation.

As to the municipalities and provinces which are served by RCMP contracts, every five or ten years for the last 70 years when these contracts have expired they have been renegotiated. The objective has always been to try to derive a fair balance so that the federal taxpayers are paying for that share of provincial and municipal contracting which represents the national benefit. We have made proposals to the provinces and municipalities. We have not yet been given a hearing by them at which I could explain to them the basis on which we feel these amounts are justified. I am fully confident that we can justify them and that RCMP contracting will continue to be a bargain—even with the increases we have asked for—for those municipalities and provinces which continue to use them and which we hope will continue to use them.

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, perhaps this is another initiative for western Canada supported by the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Surely of all times this is a time for conciliation and not for provocation of western provinces.

The minister has promised this House many times a long overdue bill to replace the RCMP Act. Will the minister tell the House what has happened to that long overdue bill and specifically how the government will address two concerns? The first is the need for far greater accountability by the RCMP to the provinces. The second is the legitimate demand by the association of 17 divisions and many individual RCMP members for an end to the paternalistic divisional representative system and the right accorded other police forces in Canada to free, full, non-strike collective bargaining.

Mr. Kaplan: Madam Speaker, I do not agree with the hon. member's characterization of the div-rep system, which is an excellent system under which progress is constantly being made. I think it serves very well the needs of members of the force in industrial relations with management.

As to accountability, I think there are ways in which we can make changes and give assurances to the provinces that their full constitutional responsibility can be exercised even though they continue to use the national police force. I am looking forward to meeting with them and discussing ways in which their constitutional integrity and responsibility can be fully assured.

With respect to the bill, it is ready and, if hon. members of all parties could indicate a willingness to deal with that bill expeditiously and refer it to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, it could be introduced very shortly.

Royal Assent

ENERGY

FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS WITH PROVINCE OF ALBERTA— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and relates to an article in today's *Ottawa Citizen*. In this article it is indicated that Alberta treasurer Lou Hyndman has said that Alberta, in effect, is not prepared to negotiate again with the federal government. He used very strong language to the effect that Alberta will not capitulate. In light of this very strong language, I would like to ask the minister what the position of the federal government has been in the past and what it will be in the future with respect to negotiations with Alberta.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the House that there has already been a meeting at the level of officials, and I expect that another meeting will take place before the end of the year. I want to stress that nobody—but nobody—has asked any provincial government, and particularly the government of Alberta, to capitulate. I find this type of language rather regrettable because what is required is a spirit of compromise on both sides. I would like to stress that this type of speech should indicate to all Canadians who are the ones who are throwing out ultimatums and who are the ones who are showing inflexibility in their approach to this important question.

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[*Translation*]

VACANCY

Madam Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that I have received from the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. McMillan) on Wednesday, December 10, 1980, a communication notifying me that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, and pursuant to section 10 of the House of Commons Act, I have addressed my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer to issue a new writ of election for the electoral district of Cardigan.

THE ROYAL ASSENT

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows: