

Inquiries of the Ministry

Minister of Transport has any statement to make concerning pension changes by the Canadian Pacific Railway?

Mr. Jamieson: No.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH

MEDICARE—ONTARIO INVESTIGATION OF BILLING BY DOCTORS—FEDERAL ACTION TO PREVENT ABUSES

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister. In view of the absence of the Minister of National Health and Welfare, in view of the startling reports that have prompted the provincial Minister of Health in Ontario to investigate the basic operation of the billing aspects of the medicare program in that province, and in view of the danger of a clear loss of respect both for the medical profession and for the medicare plan itself, can the Prime Minister inform the House exactly what measures are being pursued and exactly what steps are being taken so that the national medicare program will not be seriously abused and so that many needy people will not in this way be inadvertently deprived of the services of the medical profession?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, on this general subject of shared cost programs like medicare, where the federal government pays 50 cent dollars—permits the provinces to spend 50 cent dollars—

An hon. Member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: Did you get that?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The Prime Minister is being honest.

Mr. Trudeau:—the federal government has impressed upon the provinces the importance for them to keep these expenses under control. This applies not only to medicare but to post-secondary education, hospital grants, and so on. In all these areas where the federal taxpayer is paying 50 per cent of the cost of provincial programs, or of national programs which are administered provincially, we have constantly impressed upon the provinces the need to keep these costs under control. I am glad they are beginning—I should not say “beginning” because some time back they have indicated their strong desire to co-operate in this area.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): In view of the fact, as the Prime Minister indicated, that the federal government does participate on a 50 per cent basis in this program, can he indicate whether or not the office of the Auditor General has been directed to conduct a full investigation into the operations of the medicare program and, if the government has not directed the Auditor General to do so, can he at least assure the House that he or the

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

government will not impede the Auditor General from undertaking such an investigation should he think it necessary?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Mr. Pepin: Rewrite that now.

An hon. Member: Back to square one.

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CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY

SUGGESTED PENSION INCREASES FOR RETIRED EMPLOYEES

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Transport did not have a statement to make on motions, can he tell the House whether the Canadian Pacific Railway has advised the government of changes it is proposing to make in its pension plan and, in particular, will these cover an increase in the pensions of CPR employees already retired?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have asked the Canadian Pacific Railway to let me have the details but they have not done so up to this time. I can tell the House, however, as I am sure the hon. member knows, that at the time when we agreed to the extension and improvement of pensions in the case of Canadian National Railways I conveyed to Canadian Pacific Railway our hope that this would prompt them to do likewise and, similarly, we made other arrangements with CPR which would enable them to do this. On the basis of the announcement made I can only assume that they have in fact complied with this request. I shall try to get specific details on just what they have arranged and make them available to the hon. member early next week.

Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw): I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker. In granting extra time to the Canadian Pacific Railway to fund their plan and extending that time to 60 years, were any commitments given by the Canadian Pacific Railway that they would make some significant increase in benefits to those people already on pension?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): No, Mr. Speaker. The move was simply made to put the Canadian Pacific Railway on the same basis as Canadian National Railways.

Mr. Skoberg: In view of the fact that the plan announced by the Canadian Pacific Railway today did nothing significantly to increase pensions for those already drawing them, can the minister tell us whether he will take immediate action to make sure that the Canadian Pacific Railway will now move to do something for those people already on pension?