

for the Prime Minister. He indicated on April 1 that he would consider the matter and give an answer as quickly as possible. I asked him then whether the government endorsed the compulsory retirement at age 60 of Devco employees.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I believe I said at that time that this question should be referred to the appropriate minister.

Mr. MacInnis: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The question was put to the Prime Minister and as he has indicated he referred it to the appropriate minister. That minister was not here on the previous day, March 31, when he was supposed to be in the house. He was supposed to be here the following day when I asked this question. This plan is supposed to be put into effect on April 25, so the element of time is involved. Surely the Prime Minister as the head of the government must be aware of the attitude and the policy of the government in respect of the early retirement at age 60 of Crown corporation employees. As leader of the government surely he can give an answer without the assistance of the absent minister.

HEALTH AND WELFARE

MEDICARE—PROVINCIAL USE OF FEDERAL FUNDS

Mr. Harold Winch (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I intended to address my question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare who, according to the attendance roster, is supposed to be here today. In his absence perhaps I might address it to whoever is acting on his behalf. Is an investigation under way by the department in respect of the use by provinces of federal funds for medicare for general purposes? If so, is it contemplated by the minister or the government that legislation will be introduced to guarantee that federal assistance for medicare will be passed on to the general public through reduced provincial premiums?

[Translation]

Mr. Rosaire Gendron (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I will take that question as notice and refer it to the minister.

[English]

Mr. MacInnis: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps I will have time to accommodate the hon. member, but the question period is almost concluded, there being just four minutes left. There are four or five other hon. members around the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond who want to ask questions. Perhaps the hon. member might refer to this question again tomorrow.

THE MINISTRY

REPLACEMENT DURING ABSENCE OF MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, TRADE AND COMMERCE

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce is in Japan, and I understand will be away for two or three weeks, I should like to ask the Prime Minister who will be the acting minister of that department so we will know which minister will answer our questions?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): The acting minister is the Minister without Portfolio from Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

WHITEHORSE—MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON SELF-GOVERNMENT

Mr. Robert Simpson (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was stating government policy when he said recently in Whitehorse that there was no case at the present time for establishing a greater degree of self-government in the north?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if "at the present time" is interpreted in the strict sense he was stating government policy.

Mr. Simpson: Was the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development stating government policy when he also stated in Whitehorse that the conflict between public and private power should be resolved in Canada in favour of public ownership? On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, it has occurred to me that the Prime Minister did not hear the question correctly, as he appeared to want to answer.

Mr. Speaker: That was not my impression.