

POST OFFICE

SATURDAY DELIVERY OF RURAL MAIL—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Girve Fretz (Erie): Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity under the provisions of Standing Order 43.

In view of the fact that many small towns in rural ridings and, indeed, rural areas presently receive delivery of their mail on Saturdays, in view of the fact that this delivery date is an important one for those who have come to depend on it, and in view of the fact that the Post Office is presently considering cessation of this service, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis):

● (1415)

That the Postmaster General instruct his department to terminate consideration of the proposed ending of Saturday delivery, which is a direct slight to rural Canada.

Madam Speaker: Such a motion requires the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

CONSTITUTIONAL DISCUSSION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF INDIAN PEOPLE

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister, who tonight I understand is addressing the all chiefs and elders conference which is meeting in the city.

The Prime Minister will know, with regard to constitutional discussion, that the Conservative government agreed that representatives of the Indian people would participate fully and directly in all constitutional deliberations having an impact upon an identifiable interest in their affairs. Is it the intention of the government to honour that commitment?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition will permit me to remind him that his government, I believe it was last December, followed up the policy which we adopted in February of last year when at the first ministers' conference on the constitution the federal government put on the agenda the issue of Indian participation and obtained the consent of the various premiers to have that item concluded the way we did.

The conclusion was that we undertook to have the ministers who were discussing the constitution meet with the Indians, and I am very happy that the then prime minister, now the

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Leader of the Opposition, followed up on this commitment. We certainly intend to go in that direction as well.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, I am sure that hon. members appreciated the brief excursion into the history and background of the question. I wonder if the Prime Minister would now answer my specific question. Will the specific undertaking given by the government which I had the honour to lead be honoured in its specific terms by this government?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, the purpose of stating the history was to indicate that we gave the undertaking and, necessarily, we will carry it out. In the meantime, I am happy that the Leader of the Opposition had an opportunity to subscribe to that undertaking.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, if the Prime Minister is confused about the matter, I can advise him that the Indian people are not. They know there was a markedly different commitment given by the government which I had the honour to lead from that which was given by his government. It may well be that the Liberal government of the time was moving in that direction.

The Prime Minister could ease concern and clarify the question considerably if he would indicate to the House whether it is the intention of his government to honour in specific terms the commitment given by the government which I had the honour to lead.

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition refers to the blues, he will see that I gave that commitment at the end of my first answer.

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INDIAN ACT

REVISION OF LEGISLATION—DATE OF COMPLETION

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Madam Speaker, I direct my question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Now that the revision of the Indian Act has gone through various stages, can the minister state what his target date is for completion of that revision; and is he intending to make any changes in the terms of reference?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member's leader has just mentioned, the all chiefs and elders conference is being held during the course of this week. They will be deliberating on the Indian Act.

It is perhaps the first time in Canadian history that such a group has come together to make their views known with respect to how they perceive and, indeed, how they would like the Canadian government to proceed on this matter.

Because of this conference, I am withholding answers to questions of this type which the hon. member has just asked

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until I have at least had a chance to hear what the Indian leaders of this country say about the matter. I will be in a better position to answer questions of the type which the hon. member has just put in a couple of weeks, after I have had an opportunity to assess the feelings of the conference.

● (1420)

Mr. Schellenberger: A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. The minister and previous ministers have conducted a number of studies that were to assist in the revision of the Indian Act. All those studies are now in the hands of the minister.

Is it his intention to discuss those studies with the Indian people at this conference, or what impact will they have and what part will they play in the revision of the Indian Act?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): As I say, Madam Speaker, if one looks at the agenda, they are going into this question thoroughly. They have asked me to watch their deliberations. After the Prime Minister speaks to them tonight, they have asked me to speak to them on Thursday and respond to some of their suggestions.

I hope to be in a position then to indicate in some concrete fashion the direction in which I think we can proceed with their backing, but I will do so only in the most general terms at that early stage.

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THE CONSTITUTION**NEGOTIATION ON COLLECTIVE RIGHTS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Madam Speaker, my question is also for the Prime Minister: it is on the constitution as it pertains to the aboriginal people of this country.

I should like to ask the Prime Minister if he is prepared to negotiate with Canada's aboriginal people the entrenchment of certain collective rights for them in any new Canadian constitution.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the question is too general for me to do it justice in this particular forum. If the hon. member would indicate what he means by collective rights, we might have a little discussion about them.

Mr. Nystrom: A supplementary question, Madam Speaker: Is the Prime Minister willing to negotiate with these people the entrenchment in our constitution of certain collective rights? Those rights could be defined in future negotiations between the Indian people of this country and the federal government and perhaps the provinces.

In principle, is the Prime Minister in agreement with the entrenchment of certain collective rights for the Indian nations of this country in a new Canadian constitution?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I apologize to the hon. member, but I repeat: if he is asking me a theoretical question without indicating what he has in mind—

Mr. Nystrom: Will you negotiate?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: There seems to be a bit of worry over there. The position I have always taken on these discussions—but I realize it is perhaps not the forum to do it—is that there are very few collective rights which cannot be protected by reducing them to individual rights. I should like to know more from the hon. member about what he has in mind.

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NORTHERN PIPELINES**MACKENZIE VALLEY PIPELINE—SETTLEMENT OF DENE LAND CLAIMS**

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and also pertains to specific rights. In 1977, Mr. Justice Berger of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline inquiry called for a moratorium on major development in the north until native claims had been settled.

On March 24, 1980, application was made to the NEB for a certificate of public convenience and necessity for the building of a \$360 million, 12-inch, 560-mile oil pipeline from Norman Wells to Zama, Alberta.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Manly: Application was made—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Manly: My question is, considering the government's recent initiatives to reopen claims negotiations with the Dene people, will the minister endeavour to persuade his cabinet colleagues to instruct all government agencies involved in the decision on this pipeline to postpone any action until Dene claims have been settled in a manner that is satisfactory to the Dene people?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, I believe I shall be seeing the leadership of the Dene during the course of this week, and we will be discussing that matter. We are responding to their desire to have the land claims question to which the hon. member referred settled as quickly as possible.

Discussions have indicated that we might be able to find an acceptable solution so that all development is not frozen in the meantime. I wanted the involvement of the Dene in the type of solution that I am hopeful we can arrive at.