

room for negotiation, that the federal government had locked up the budget and that the Prime Minister implied that it would be very inconvenient to alter it, why did the Prime Minister refuse any further discussions with Premier Lougheed because they would inconvenience his timetable? Surely this action on the part of the Prime Minister seems to be less than co-operative and conciliatory.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, if the facts as stated by the hon. member were correct, it would indeed seem a bit strange. I point out to the hon. member that I do not know exactly what has been said by Premier Lougheed. However, quite the contrary, I invited him to come down and meet me in Ottawa. I was prepared to have discussions with him. Though his letter was dated the seventeenth, I do not know at what time it left Alberta. It was sent on a Friday; I received it Monday morning.

An hon. Member: Tell Ouellet about that.

Mr. Trudeau: It is not so unusual that a letter posted at perhaps eleven o'clock in the evening in Alberta would only reach my hands by Monday morning, but those are the facts.

I thereupon considered whether I would meet Premier Lougheed or not, and I repeat that I invited him to come down to meet me yesterday on this subject. The point is that I did not want him to come under the illusion that there would be major changes in the budget made at that point. I think even hon. members opposite will realize that the budget, which was going to be brought down eight days after I received the letter, was pretty far advanced in its preparation. So in fairness I told Premier Lougheed that I would be happy to see him, but if he had really wanted to suggest major changes I imagine he would have written me sooner than eight days before the budget was to be brought down.

There were discussions earlier in the month of October between ministers when the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources—I believe on October 2 or 3 or thereabouts—went west and made a whole new series of proposals which were turned down. They were still open until, I would say, about the 15th of the month. But the hon. member and the House should realize that by October 20, since the budget was being brought in on the twenty-eighth, we were pretty close to a final package. I had to be quite frank with the premier on that, but I assured him that the budget would contain many pleasant surprises and that if he wanted to have a preview of them, he would be welcome, although it is probably contrary to the principle of budget secrecy. Since our provisions do impact in a very particular way on Alberta, I would have been prepared to give him a preview of the budget yesterday, which is well in advance of the usual timetable.

• (1448)

Mr. Mazankowski: Madam Speaker, there seems to be some conflicting evidence here, inasmuch as the Minister of Finance, as late as last Friday, indicated in an answer to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre that budgetary options were still being considered at present. Given the fact

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that the negotiation of an energy package was of the utmost importance to the people of Alberta, and indeed to all Canadians, is it not true that the Prime Minister telephoned the Premier of Alberta Thursday afternoon, October 23, and said that there was absolutely no room for negotiation, that they had locked up the budget, that he implied that it would be very inconvenient to alter it, and that in any event there was no room for negotiation? The answer which the Premier of Alberta gave in the legislature yesterday indicated that the door was absolutely closed, notwithstanding the fact that the Minister of Finance said last Friday that options were still being considered. The Prime Minister cannot have it both ways, surely.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I was not in the House on Friday and therefore I am not quite sure to what suggestion from the NDP that answer was given. But surely no member in this House would think that three days before the budget is brought down such a fundamental question as energy pricing and the whole energy regime could still be renegotiated with any of the provinces. If that is the suggestion, let me point out that it is an absolute impossibility for such a thing to happen. Even the hon. member for St. John's West knows that the very printing of the budget is probably finished, except for very minor details, as long as three days before the budget is brought down.

Those are the facts and that is what I said to Premier Lougheed. I said, "We cannot, at this late stage, reopen the whole question of negotiations on energy; so if you are coming down for that, I am sorry, it is too late, but I am happy to receive you." I told him that he was the premier and he had budgets of his own—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Answers should be shorter. The question period is far advanced and we have not had many questions.

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THE CONSTITUTION

PROPOSED RESOLUTION—REPRESENTATION OF NATIVE GROUPS BEFORE JOINT COMMITTEE

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Madam Speaker, my question as well is for the Prime Minister and it is with regard to the exchange of correspondence between him and the NDP which resulted in the unconditional surrender by the NDP of any principles or commitments they ever had—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Oberle:—with respect to human rights, the rights of minorities in our country, and particularly the very special rights which native people have in our society. I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether it was entirely the letter of the NDP that was the basis of support on which the Prime Minister acted, not only to circumvent Parliament but to circumvent any meaningful further discussions with the prov-

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inces and with the native people, the aboriginal people of our country, before this action was taken in Britain, or is he now prepared, in recognition of the response which has been received in the House and from the native people throughout the country, to reopen the discussions and in particular provide access for these minority groups to the committee in a meaningful way?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, it is not my role to defend the NDP; I am sure they can defend their own actions.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: They are in your caucus; why don't you defend them?

Mr. Trudeau: I may have defended them many, many years ago, Madam Speaker, and I would have been prepared to defend them again had they accepted my offer to join this party when we formed the government.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: The cat is out of the bag.

An hon. Member: They are an extension.

An hon. Member: You seduced them.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Trudeau: It still seems difficult to understand how they can be accused of having surrendered their principles when what they asked for was exactly what the western premiers were asking for—

Some hon. Members: No.

An hon. Member: False.

An hon. Member: They got nothing.

Mr. Trudeau: I am not saying they did not ask for more. We know that the premiers are insatiable and that they asked for a great deal more. But I am suggesting that what was asked for by the NDP was action in the field of indirect taxation of resources and interprovincial trade on resources, which is certainly not going against the principles of anyone in the House; therefore, I do not see how it can be a surrendering of principles.

As for the entrenchment of the rights of native people, here again I fail to understand the logic of the party opposite. Because what we are doing is bringing back the constitution in the hope that then we will be able to deal with amendments relating to the native people and to many other subjects. I point out to the Tory party that that is exactly what they were doing last week when they proposed to this House—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Sit down.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Even the Chair is confused as to whether the question is still being answered or new questions are being asked. I ask hon. members to try to discipline themselves. I think today I cannot go on numbers, I will have to go on time and immediately recognize, in the normal order, members from the NDP and allow the rest of the time to the Conservatives. This question period has to be disciplined to some extent. Does the hon. member for Prince George-Peace River have a supplementary question? Will he make it short, please.

Mr. Oberle: Madam Speaker, clearly we have two types of rights which need to be protected in the constitution, the rights as the Prime Minister perceives them—

Some hon. Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Will the hon. member put his question immediately without a preamble, please.

Mr. Oberle: Does the Prime Minister depend on the leader of the NDP to write a letter to Her Majesty the Queen and the British parliament to convince them that they should patriate a package, which is clearly a wanton denial of the basic rights of many people in this country, except for those rights which the Prime Minister wishes to entrench for his own purpose?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, put very simply, the Conservative party last week moved that this House adopt—

Mr. Oberle: Bring the constitution home and let us deal with it here.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Patriate the constitution.

An hon. Member: Why don't you sit down; you cannot answer the question.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. It is the Speaker who maintains order in this House. The Right Hon. Prime Minister will continue to answer the question, and I hope he will have peace so he can answer it.

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, very simply, the Tory party last week proposed a motion and voted affirmatively on that motion to patriate the constitution with an amending formula. There was nothing in that resolution, as was pointed out by the hon. member for Ottawa Centre in the debate, to protect the native people—nothing. The idea was to get the constitution here and then put something in to protect the native people. That is exactly what we want to do, to get it here and then put something in to protect the native people.

• (1450)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!