

*Oral Questions*

I want the House to bear in mind that when I say "fairness" we mean fairness to the Canadian taxpayer. This seems to escape the hon. gentleman. It is important that we be fair to both sides in this dispute, as we represent the public as well as our employees.

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**THE CONSTITUTION**

## CONSULTATIONS WITH INDIAN GROUPS

**Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Justice who was here a minute ago but has left. Perhaps I could put the question to the Prime Minister. This week, at a meeting in Saskatchewan with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development said that the Indians of Canada would be fully consulted on their constitutional proposals and that their rights would be protected in any new constitution.

Would the Minister of Justice or the Prime Minister tell the House whether these consultations will take place before December 9, the date when the special committee must report, and whether the protections that the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development referred to might be incorporated by amendment into the proposed constitution act of 1980, submitted to the House of Commons on October 6?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, subject to verification it is my understanding that the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has his officials meeting with Indian groups this week and that he plans to meet with them in the very near future.

In so far as the undertaking that Indians and native people generally would be involved in amendments to the constitution which concern them, I gave that undertaking personally several months ago at a meeting of native chiefs here in Ottawa. I think in that regard it is clear that we have established that we are anxious to find ways in which they would see their rights better protected.

I have suggested and I repeat that as soon as we have the constitution back in Canada with the basic rights entrenched, we will be happy to go into a next phase where we would put native rights as one of the first items on the agenda and deal with it then. In the meantime, I am very happy to see our ministers and officials attempting to work out with Indians and with Inuit leaders ways in which that could be best stated in the constitution.

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**PENSIONS REVIEW BOARD**

## INQUIRY RESPECTING INCREASE IN STAFF

**Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg-Assiniboine):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Acting Minister of Veterans

Affairs. In a letter to the late minister last August, the War Amputations of Canada made the minister and his officials aware of the fact that between 1972 and 1980 some 370 of their members died during the time the service bureau of that organization was working on their claims for pensions. In view of this very alarming statistic, can the acting minister tell the House what steps the department is taking to bring the staff of the Pensions Review Board up to strength?

[Translation]

**Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence):** Madam Speaker, as everyone knows, I was appointed acting minister only a few days ago and I am quite aware of the importance of the matter raised by the hon. member. I will refer it to department officials to determine how I will be able to give him a better answer in a few days.

[English]

**Mr. McKenzie:** A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Can the minister also tell the House, in view of the number of cases pending, if the Bureau of Pensions Advocates now has a full staff of advocates?

[Translation]

**Mr. Lamontagne:** Madam Speaker, some positions remain to be filled on that bureau and with the co-operation of my officials I intend to see to it immediately that they are as soon as possible. I am as much aware as my hon. colleague is that if there is any backlog in the bureau's work some veterans will suffer and that is something I always try very hard to avoid.

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[English]

**CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS**

## SUGGESTED PRIVATIZATION—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville):** Madam Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Transport. It arises out of the recent speech made by Dr. LeClair, corporate vice-president of CNR, wherein he suggested that the government might consider the possibility of partial privatization of CNR. May I ask the minister if this is being actively considered by the government and, if so, when the details might be made known?

**Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport):** Madam Speaker, indeed the vice-president of CN was reflecting the tremendous financial needs CN will have in the coming years, particularly for developments in western Canada, such as double tracking in many instances. CN has a problem and the solution Mr. LeClair recommended is one that the government is looking at presently. An announcement will be made, if needed, after discussion of this issue within the government itself.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** A supplementary question. If such a decision is being considered at the present time, would the