

Inquiries of the Ministry

Hon. Léo Cadieux (Minister of National Defence): The hon. member is proceeding on a wrong assumption.

Mr. Hees: May I rephrase my question, Mr. Speaker. Is it the intention of the government when it meets with our NATO allies in a few days time to advise them that Canada intends to withdraw our air division from Europe by the end of 1970?

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): It is the intention of the government to indicate through me to our allies that we are planning a phased reduction of our forces over there.

Mr. Hees: May I ask a final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker? Is that not exactly what I asked in the first place, and could the minister not have answered it simply by saying yes?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This was a final supplementary question.

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Defence. Has the government as yet reached a decision with respect to our troop reductions in NATO as indicated by the President of the Privy Council in London the day before yesterday?

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have a plan that I will submit to the alliance on Wednesday of next week.

Mr. Nesbitt: I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I realise that the minister must have certain difficulties in divulging the plans to Canadians prior to his announcement of the plans to our NATO allies, but is there any way the minister can devise to indicate to our allies next Wednesday what our intentions are and at the same time not close the door completely so that this parliament may have some say in the matter before it is finally decided?

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): I am not that ingenious, Mr. Speaker. What I have to do, I believe, is to convey to the allies what the intentions of the government are and at the same time to consult with them on the implementation of the program. I do not think we preclude any suggestions that might come from the allies that there might be other ways of doing things along the general lines we are considering. I find it very difficult, of course, to reconcile the necessity of giving as much information beforehand as I would like to and

yet not disclosing the program completely before my announcement to NATO. However, I think the hon. member will be reassured when I tell him that the recommendations and opinions expressed in this house have not been completely ignored in the plan that we are going to submit.

Mr. Nesbitt: Only 1 per cent.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Halifax-Dartmouth, East): My question is supplementary to the one directed to the Minister of National Defence. Does the minister intend to discuss with our NATO allies Canada's maritime contribution under SACLANT or directly to NATO?

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): The first purpose of these consultations concerns, of course, the troops which are and which will be stationed overseas. But this does not preclude discussion of the maritime effort which Canada is making within NATO and I would be open to any suggestions there.

Mr. Forrestall: If I understand the minister correctly, then, it is not his intention in his presentation to our allies to raise the matter of the maritime commitment himself.

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): Not necessarily. But again, I think I would be prepared to discuss it.

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): Are we to take it from the minister's answer that the government has decided upon a maritime role for the Canadian Forces?

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): If I understand the question correctly, yes.

Mr. Nowlan: Then can the minister get in touch with the chairman of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence and find out what the committee is doing wasting its time reviewing the maritime role of such forces?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

INDIAN AFFAIRSALLEGATION BY PROVINCIAL PREMIER
RESPECTING AGREEMENT

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and ask him whether he has any comment to make about the accusation made by Premier Robarts of Ontario regarding the dismal lack of action on the part of the Ontario government, the reason for