

Inquiries of the Ministry

it is, and given full weight in the making of any decision?

Hon. Léo Cadieux (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I can make the commitment that I will very gladly receive the premier of the province and discuss this problem with him whenever it is feasible for both of us to do so.

Mr. MacLean: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that assurance. Will similar arrangements be made in respect of other provincial governments that wish to take similar action?

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): Mr. Speaker, the case of each base is different and I do not think calls for the same kind of treatment.

Mr. MacLean: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask one more supplementary question on this very important matter. I address it to the Prime Minister. Will the Right Honourable Prime Minister assure the house that before any closure takes place the government will implement measures to compensate as far as humanly possible for any economic hardship that may be caused to the people and communities concerned?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would not give that undertaking in respect of any closure, because it is conceivable that in some areas closure would not have the significant consequences about which the hon. member is concerned. But in cases where there would be significant hardship, as the hon. member says, I can give an undertaking that the government would not proceed with the closure without having considered alternative ways of alleviating that hardship.

Mr. MacLean: I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Prime Minister for his assurance and say, by way of clarification, that I had in mind areas that are heavily dependent economically on the existence of defence bases.

Mr. Trudeau: If that is the case, we would give the type of consideration which the hon. member is suggesting before making any announcement of such closures. We do realize that some bases are not economic units and if any such bases were closed in less developed parts of Canada we hope that they would be linked to some other action by the government to ensure that growth centres spring up in the areas where closure is contemplated.

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Has-tings): I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister. In view of the fact he stated that in cases where bases are closed down the government will do everything it possibly can to ease the situation imposed on those who are affected, would he initiate this policy with regard to Camp Picton which is practically closed down now and where nothing whatsoever has been done to ease the situation of the 1500 people who are affected?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Hon. members will recognize that we are now getting involved in the field of individual stations. I wonder whether this is what hon. members want to do. Now that the hon. member has made his representation I think we should go on to another subject.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): My supplementary question is directed to the Minister of National Defence. Can he tell us whether or not he is still able to adhere to the August 1 deadline for the announcement of the reported 15 or up to 15 bases that are going to be closed? While he is on his feet, could he also give some indication as to the progress achieved by him and his colleagues in the formulation of an interim program of financial assistance where the economic impact will be quite severe?

Mr. Speaker: The minister should be allowed to answer the first part of the question. However, it seems to me that the second part is too wide in scope and would require a statement on motions.

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): Mr. Speaker, may I say with your permission, first that we have never contemplated closing 15 bases. This is an exaggeration. I should like to say in reply to the first part of the question that there is not much hope that I can meet the August 1 deadline. There is a possibility, but it is rather remote. However, this is not a bad indication.

Mr. Forrestall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The purport of the second part of my question was not to ask for an explanation but rather for a yes or no reply on whether or not the minister and his colleagues have arrived at a workable formula, and not necessarily to explain the formula.

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): I could say that we are pretty close to it, Mr. Speaker.