

Inquiries of the Ministry

As hon. members know, the provisions of Standing Order 26 are not intended to provide additional opportunities for the purpose of discussing grievances. It seems that no useful purpose could be served by moving the adjournment of the house to consider what are essentially problems of a continuing nature, one of which, according to the hon. member, goes back to 1966.

The Standing Order applies to a sudden emergency where an immediate debate, given priority over the announced business of the house, might influence the course of immediately impending government action of a specific nature. And, according to the rules and precedents, even if there is urgency of debate, adjournment under Standing Order 26 cannot be granted if there are other opportunities for debate within a reasonable time.

On this particular point, hon. members have heard the discussion which took place earlier today on motions. They might come to the conclusion I have reached, that there will be a number of opportunities open to hon. members who may wish to debate the several grievances raised in the hon. member's proposed motion. In particular, as has been mentioned by hon. members during the short debate on the ministerial statement of the President of the Privy Council, the six-day budget debate will begin tomorrow night and should be continued within a reasonable time thereafter.

As we approach the end of the current semester provided by Standing Order 58, the actual number of remaining allotted days becomes increasingly relevant. There are still eight allotted days in the period which will lapse automatically at the end of this month by reason of the operation of Standing Order 58. We therefore have a total of 14 sitting days that can be used for such purposes between now and the end of the month.

In the circumstances, the hon. member's proposed motion cannot be considered at this time.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

NATO—INQUIRY AS TO EXTENT OF REDUCTION PROPOSED AT BRUSSELS MEETING RESPECTING CANADIAN FORCES

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of National Defence. Arising from the minister's statement that the

proposal he made to our NATO allies was a precise response to the NATO problems, will the minister now, briefly but precisely, tell the house the proposal he made to our NATO allies, the precise reductions of forces he proposed, thereby doing what I am sure he wants to do, to treat this house with the respect he feels toward it and to which it is entitled?

Hon. Léo Cadieux (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I am trying to analyse the question posed by the Leader of the Opposition. First of all, he is talking of the precise response to the ministerial guidance I indicated we would be following. If he would care to read the communiqué I tabled he will find this particular phrase: "In particular the conventional capability, flexibility and mobility".

We are talking here of the forces that should be committed for use in NATO. The proposal I made in the name of the Canadian government was according to this ministerial guidance. Incidentally, this flows from a study made by Canadian officers which in my estimation is a prefiguration of what the forces will be in the future. I cannot be precise on numbers. I think I indicated in a press conference you can either overestimate or underestimate a force of that nature. The proposal that was made could be described as a self-contained force which would be stripped as much as possible of a ponderous administrative organization. I think we can say that what we propose would not reduce the number of bayonets, if we could call it that. It would be a force that would be flexible and would have back of it the howitzers and gun ships. This would be a brand new thing. We believe it would be very worth while and helpful to the situation in Europe.

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Might I take it from the minister's answer that he did not make a definite proposal in Brussels to the NATO ministers but rather just a general statement as to the objectives? Did the minister make a definite proposal in Brussels as to the contribution Canada was prepared to make?

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): I made both, Mr. Speaker. I did explain the rationale of the force we proposed. I also indicated in my statement today that the proposals which we put forward would involve the conversion of the present mechanized brigade group to an air transportable combat group with helicopter support. This is very precisely in military