

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

when he intends to meet a very large cross-section of men and officers of all ranks who will express their views freely. Will the minister now give an assurance that the proposed meeting will be held openly and in the presence of the press?

**Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence):** I would think not, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Churchill:** A supplementary question. I would ask the minister whether it would not be possible for him to revise that decision in view of the fact that security matters are unlikely to be discussed. The matters to be discussed will concern only the minister's proposed plan of unification, will they not?

**Mr. Hellyer:** It would be possible, but I would expect that that kind of encounter would not produce the full and frank exchange of opinions which I would desire.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Behind closed doors.

**Mr. Churchill:** If the minister would allow debate here he would have a full and frank exchange of opinion. May I ask him a supplementary question. Will this very large cross-section of men and officers which the minister mentioned be very carefully selected in advance? Will they be screened?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I am sure that the hon. member will agree that that question is not acceptable.

**Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton South):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of National Defence. Since he is going to appear in Halifax to allow a cross-section of service personnel to express their views freely, am I to understand that the rules and regulations will be changed to allow this to take place or has the minister taken upon himself the responsibility of permitting free expression of opinion, which is against the written rule?

**Mr. Hellyer:** I will take full responsibility for what occurs, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** The rules notwithstanding.

[*Translation*]

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE****REQUEST FOR DELAY IN CLOSING OF OFFICES**

On the orders of the day:

**Mr. Albert Béchard (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State):** Mr. Speaker,

[Mr. Churchill.]

I should like to put a question to the Minister of Labour.

Could the minister tell the house and the Canadian people in general whether the government intends to implement the arbitrary and unrealistic policy advocated by U.I.C. officials with a view to closing most unemployment insurance offices in Canada?

[*English*]

**Hon. J. R. Nicholson (Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, as I think I said on an earlier occasion, it is not a case of the government acting arbitrarily or otherwise. Certain responsibilities have been delegated by parliament to the Unemployment Insurance Commission. I have the assurance of the commission that they will receive and consider representations even though their preliminary thinking and plans may involve the closing of offices. But I wish to reiterate that the responsibility rests with the commission.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe):** Mr. Speaker I should like to ask the Minister of Labour whether, before those unemployment insurance offices are closed, the matter will be brought before parliament so as to give us the opportunity to discuss it in this house?

[*English*]

**Mr. Nicholson:** I would think not, Mr. Speaker. Parliament has already delegated this responsibility to the Unemployment Insurance Commission and a number of offices have been closed by them. I might say that this is not surprising since for many years the work of the National Employment Service was conducted by the Unemployment Insurance Commission. Since the functions of the National Employment Service have been transferred to another branch of government there does not remain anything like the same volume of work for the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

In the interest of good administration the commission is making these decisions, but they are not making them arbitrarily. They are listening and will listen to the representations which are made from time to time by members of this house and others interested.

**Hon. Théogène Ricard (Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot):** A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister of Labour use his good offices to see that the office in Saint-Hyacinthe is retained, because it is one of the oldest?