

Inquiries of the Ministry

permanent council, partly elected by volunteers, and the further fact that such council has not yet been established, will the minister inform the house whether election procedures for the purpose are in process of being prepared, and when the election of the permanent council may be expected?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Secretary of State): Quite willingly, Mr. Speaker. The Company of Young Canadians sent us draft regulations which are now under consideration and which will have to be submitted soon to the cabinet.

[*English*]

Mr. Lewis: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. May I also ask the minister whether he received a letter from the volunteers association of the Company dealing with this matter. If so, what reply has he given the association; if he has not yet given a reply, will he be able to assure them of the election of the council within the next month or two?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pelletier: I have in fact received representations and I intend to reply when I am better able to foresee how long it will be before approval is given to the election procedure needed to establish the permanent council.

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT REACTION TO SUGGESTED
DISBANDMENT

Hon. D. S. Harkness (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Secretary of State. In view of the wide spread disfavour with which the work of the Company of Young Canadians is held by a large number of people in Canada, is the government now considering the disbandment of this organization?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, like everyone else, I am aware of the criticism, at times quite severe, to be found in the newspapers against the Company of Young Canadians. I hope that the hon. member is also aware of the very good things that are often said about it.

There is absolutely no question at the present time of putting an end to the activities of the Company.

[*English*]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

ADDITIONAL PASSPORT ISSUING SERVICE

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Can the minister advise the house of any plans for solving the problems in the passport office occasioned by the resignation of five staff members due to unsatisfactory working conditions?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I had a report I could have given the house but I was not satisfied that it answered all of the questions that were in the minds of hon. members. I am sure that one of the reasons for the resignation of some of these members of the staff of the passport office is the great burden of overtime work they have all had to bear. We have increased the staff of the passport office by many, many scores. Notwithstanding that, 7,500 hours of overtime have been worked. We are asking the staff to work Saturdays on a regular basis. I hope the members of the house will realize what a tremendous job the passport office is doing, notwithstanding the fact that some passports have not been issued as quickly as they would have liked.

Mr. Fairweather: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would it not be possible to augment the government's very sensible plan to open regional offices, as announced some months ago?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, if it were as easy as that we should have done it yesterday. The trouble is that we have to have trained personnel. The purpose of the passport office in part is to see that unauthorized persons do not obtain passports. I do not think we ought to reduce security provisions in order to increase volume.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the government considered increasing the staff of its office in Ottawa so that applications may be processed more quickly. Also, will that staff be payed at a higher than usual rate for any overtime it puts in?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, the staff has already been augmented by 90 persons in recent weeks. We brought them in to deal with the overload. One of our problems of course is lack of space. Perhaps I should not