

Inquiries of the Ministry

churches, schools and hospitals; and if not, when does he expect to have one?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It seems to me that this question requires further investigation than one could expect at this time. May I suggest the order paper.

NATIONAL DEFENCE**INQUIRY AS TO POLICY RESPECTING RETIREMENT**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Defence. Have the 500 officers in the air force who are being retired prematurely been notified individually of their retirement, or are they still being kept in suspense?

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether they have yet been notified, but if they have not they will be at once.

The hon. member for Bow River asked a question yesterday in this regard, and I may say now that approval has been given to a proposal to advance the release date of a number of R.C.A.F. aircrew and air traffic control officers. These officers numbering about 500 are surplus to present and anticipated requirements during the normal period of their unexpired service.

The group concerned consists of an equal number of short service commissioned officers, serving extensions, and permanent commissioned officers nearing the end of their service career. Their termination of service is in no way a reflection on the officers concerned. On the contrary, their loyal and devoted service is recognized. Both categories have been selected to preserve a reasonable age spread among aircrew officers. Future programming confirms that these personnel will remain surplus to requirements, and in consequence it is planned to release or retire them this summer. All concerned, both short service and permanent commissioned officers, are included in the special benefits plan now being considered by the government for service personnel no longer required.

Mr. Nielsen: A supplementary question. Are similar mass lay-offs being planned among the officer personnel of the army and navy?

Mr. Hellyer: Reductions will take place whenever surpluses are determined and whenever it is not possible to provide adequate employment for the personnel.

Mr. Nielsen: Could the minister advise the house whether he or his department is now

planning any such mass lay-offs in the army and navy among the officer personnel?

Mr. Hellyer: There are no immediate plans in this direction but as the integration process goes forward reductions will take place in all three services, as announced previously.

Mr. Eldon Woolliams (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Is any extra compensation planned for these men who are being let out now before their service expires?

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker, I have just indicated that the government is now considering a plan which will have this effect.

SHAWINIGAN, QUE.—AMOUNT OF CLOTHING STOLEN FROM ARMOURY

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Defence which is based on an answer to a written question which was given me yesterday. It refers to the items and quantities of military equipment stolen from national defence property since last September, and my interest in part was as to the amount of military clothing which was taken from the Shawinigan armoury in Quebec, the amount being unknown to me.

The answer I received from the minister reads "Unknown amount of military clothing, February 20, 1964, Shawinigan armoury, Shawinigan, Quebec". Can the minister explain that answer and give the house some indication why it is impossible to ascertain the amount of military equipment stolen?

Hon. Lucien Cardin (Associate Minister of National Defence): I will be happy to look into this matter, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker, "looking into the matter" is scarcely enough. I placed a written question on the order paper which stood there for almost two months, and this is the type of answer which is produced. The quantity of equipment is unknown to me, and the answer I get is "quantity unknown". Surely this is a flagrant abuse of the rules affecting answers which should be given in the house.

Mr. Speaker: The minister has said that he will look into the matter, and I think he should be given time to do so.

Mr. Cardin: Mr. Speaker, the answer to this question was very voluminous and I cannot say any more at this time than that I will look into the matter.