

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

the ultimate effect of the exercise of the prerogative of the executive could result in profound social and economic dislocation for a community—such as would be the case in Gimli in my constituency; and I realize a decision has not yet been made with respect to the Canadian forces base at Gimli—the executive has a responsibility to consult with interested members of the community.

• (10:00 p.m.)

For example, the community has a right to know the criteria upon which the executive decision is to be based. Is the decision simply to be made on the basis of the internal efficiency of the department, or are wider social and economic implications taken into account? In such a situation, also, I believe citizens have the right to expect every possible effort to be made by their government to permit them the opportunity to present their point of view in the most forceful and effective manner possible. Without public hearings of some description they can never be sure that this will be done.

Moreover, the general public has the right, whenever such great social and economic dislocation is possible, to be able to weigh the relative merits of the closure of one base in one area of the country against the closure of another base in another area. Thus, there is a strong case to be made for revelation of the total package of recommendations before action is taken, rather than being notified of decisions on an ad hoc basis.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the general public has a right to know what action, if any, the government contemplates to offset the adverse social and economic effects of base closures in those communities where bases are to be closed. The general public has a right to discuss with and make representations to the government about the efficacy and adequacy of its plans for compensation, for alternative employment and alternative means of income for the community, if indeed the government

has any such plans. Therefore, I would strongly urge the minister, through his representative here this evening, to reconsider his approach to the problem, if I have interpreted his remarks correctly and he has no intention of setting up a mechanism to allow the expression of public opinion. In a situation as fraught with social and economic consequences as the closure of a Canadian forces base the public has a right to be heard before the executive exercises its prerogative to make the final decision.

Mr. D. W. Groos (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I am always interested in hearing what the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Rowland) has to say. I must say that, personally, I sympathize with him and I think he has presented his case with remarkable vigour. But in response to the question from the hon. member there is really nothing that I can add to the reply given by my minister in the House last Friday. At that time, as the member has said, the minister stated that in order to achieve the objective of operating within a fixed budget there are certain decisions that are an executive prerogative. The minister further stated that he expected to make a final decision early in June or at the end of May.

The practice has been to consult with local authorities concerning the plans for base consolidation. The policy is to provide one year's notice of intention concerning the future of bases that are affected by this program. Further, in respect to people employed, the practice is to provide six months' notice. Every effort is made by the department, in conjunction with other agencies, to assist these employees. I know the minister will be very pleased to read in *Hansard* tomorrow the representations which have been made by the hon. member for Selkirk, and I thank him for making them.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.06 p.m.