

facturers inviting them to make proposals against our specifications and we have requested that these proposals be in our hands by March 21.

Mr. Nowlan: I appreciate the minister's answer up to a point. It is basically the same answer as we have been given for the last one and a half or two years. Is there any way in which the hon. gentleman, who is new to his office, can expedite the assessment of these proposals so that an early decision can be reached inasmuch as the present aircraft is fast getting to a point at which safety is becoming a large factor in its operation? Will the hon. gentleman also make sure that the plan to allow all parts of Canada to share in the replacement of the aircraft will not adversely affect the decision?

Mr. Richardson: I believe I indicated we were moving ahead. We have set a deadline for proposals to reach us from the manufacturers; their proposals are to be in our hands by March 21. We will also be looking at the regional aspects and, hopefully, this major purchase will bring industrial benefit to all regions of Canada.

Mr. Speaker: There are a number of hon. members wishing to ask supplementaries. We shall return to this subject in a moment.

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

BUTTER—IMPORTS FROM NEW ZEALAND AND OTHER COUNTRIES—MEASURES TO PROTECT CANADIAN PRODUCERS

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of Agriculture.

As Canada imported in the last few weeks several million dollars' worth of butter from New Zealand, can the minister tell the House whether he will recommend to the Canadian Dairy Commission that it take more adequate steps to protect our dairy industry in the coming months?

[English]

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the import program of the Canadian Dairy Commission does protect the dairy industry, and the dairy industry has been more stable under that program than it has ever been before in the history of Canada. It is my intention to discuss with the Canadian Dairy Commission the program for production this year. I have already had some discussion with them.

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Can the minister tell the House whether, in addition to what it has imported from New Zealand, Canada has also imported butter—and I said "butter"—from other countries?

[English]

Mr. Whelan: None that I know of lately, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Questions

NATIONAL DEFENCE

INCREASE IN 1973-74 BUDGET—POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER CUTBACKS IN MANPOWER OR BASE CONSOLIDATION—PAYMENT OF MILITIA UNIT PERSONNEL

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Darmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of National Defence tell the House in connection with the unfreezing of the armed forces budget whether the extension of the budget is intended to cover capital costs only or whether the government has contingency plans for further cutbacks in manpower or base consolidation to meet annual escalation of costs, the point to which attention was drawn by my hon. friend earlier?

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence): The figures for the 1973-74 budget will, of course, be revealed when the estimates for the department are tabled. I can only say at this time that the budget is unfrozen. It has been unfrozen in order to meet increasing costs and particularly to provide for new capital equipment. Expenditure on capital equipment will be greater than last year and will also represent a larger percentage of the total budget.

Mr. Forrestall: Would the House permit me to ask the minister whether he has taken any steps in the interim to offset the extraordinary difficulty which militia units across the country have faced in the last month or so with respect to cash on hand to meet payrolls?

Mr. Richardson: We shall perhaps never have all the funds we need in each area, but the unfreezing of the budget is in part to meet that requirement.

SUGGESTED REDEPLOYMENT OF ARMED FORCES ELEMENTS TO NEWFOUNDLAND TO CONSOLIDATE STRATEGY AND PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): In view of the admirable intention of the Minister of National Defence to promote the decentralization of industrial development to assist western Canada, would the hon. gentleman advise us whether he is considering giving attention to the redeployment of elements of the Canadian Armed Forces to the province of Newfoundland in order to consolidate defence strategy and promote economic development where it is most needed?

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence): I stated in answer to a question a few days ago that I was looking at our search and rescue operation in Newfoundland, but I have nothing at this time to report to the House.

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INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

Mr. Steven E. Paproski (Edmonton Centre): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary question is for the Minister of Agriculture. In light of the fact that egg prices went up 16 per cent and bacon prices went up 46.5 per cent last year, and in light of the government's food supply policies