

Inquiries of the Ministry

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence): I will be glad to take the suggestion under advisement, but in view of the allegations contained in the question I am not sure that it falls within the rules of the house. Perhaps Your Honour would rule upon that.

Mr. Churchill: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. If the minister will not make available the information given at that press conference, I shall have to ask him whether it is his intention to mislead the house on the answers he gave to questions asked on national defence.

Mr. Hellyer: No, certainly not, Mr. Speaker.

C.F.B. CORNWALLIS—REPORTED INTENTION TO CLOSE BY 1968

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Digby-Annapolis-Kings): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a question of the Minister of National Defence of which I have given him notice. Would he confirm the report that officers and men at C.F.B. *Cornwallis* were advised yesterday that the base would be closed by 1968 if present defence plans proceed?

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence): According to the information I have received, the commanding officer said that the base would not be closed in any event before 1968 but that in fact no decision had been taken; that it would have to be referred through the staff to the ministerial level for decision. In respect of the whole question of base consolidation, no decisions have been taken as yet; the matter has not been studied at the ministerial level. When it is, and if some bases have to be closed, due notice will be given and a planned, phased consolidation announced, in accordance with the suggestion made by my hon. friend and other people.

Mr. Nowlan: I have a supplementary question for the minister. When that consolidation study has clarified the position and plans are arrived at, I wonder whether the minister will take into consideration the precedent set by the Secretary of Defence of the United States and announce the decision publicly beforehand, to give a chance to those affected adversely by such closure and so-called consolidation to make whatever representations they wish to make?

Mr. Hellyer: Yes, Mr. Speaker, this may be done, but by the time the studies have been completed and all the facts carefully taken into account, and assuming that some consolidation is required notwithstanding the obvious economic difficulties in some areas that are posed as a result of this, although opportunity would be provided for representations to be made I am not giving any assurance that these would change the results of the study.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question, in the light of what has just been said, must be directed to the Prime Minister. I would ask the right hon. gentleman whether he would give to those in the maritime provinces, who now enjoy some \$300 million annually out of the defence structure, every assurance that cut-backs as a result of base consolidation will not be made in the flow and extent of these dollars and cents.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we will do what we can to see that this does not happen.

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton North and Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of National Defence. Can he recall, or is he aware, that prior to the closing of the Point Edward base he gave a somewhat similar assurance that it would not be closed, but it was closed very shortly thereafter?

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of National Defence on the matter of the consolidation of military bases. In view of the contemplated meeting among representatives of the Manitoba government and the community of Rivers—in fact, the southwestern Manitoba region—will the information presented at that meeting be taken into consideration in respect of any decisions reached with reference to the Rivers base?

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker, the associate minister is seeing representatives, I think on the 28th, and certainly all the factors put forward by the delegation at that time will be taken into consideration.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

REPORTED INTENTION TO REMOVE ROYAL COAT OF ARMS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. D. V. Pugh (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime