

government made a decision to reduce Canada's naval contribution to NATO?

**Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence):** No, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Harkness:** A supplementary question. Has the government plans which will enable the ships now wearing out and which during the course of the next five or six years will have to be retired to be replaced in time so that we can continue to meet our commitment to NATO?

**Mr. Hellyer:** Mr. Speaker, we have the ships to meet the commitment we now have. We are urgently working on plans in respect of any future commitments for a later time.

**Mr. Harkness:** A further supplementary question. Is the minister not aware that it takes several years to initiate and carry to completion a naval program, and that if such a program is not started immediately there will be no possibility of our continuing to provide the number of ships we have been providing?

**Mr. Hellyer:** I am very much aware of that, and I am also very much aware of the fact that if you initiate the wrong program it takes quite a few years to undo it.

**Some hon. Members:** How about the Arrow?

#### COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION OF PROGRAM OF AIR BASE ABANDONMENT

On the orders of the day:

**Hon. J. A. MacLean (Queens):** I should like to ask the Minister of National Defence if he can assure the house that no final decision will be taken on the proposed drastic program of abandoning defence bases as part of the minister's current austerity program until the special committee on defence has had an opportunity of examining the whole matter?

**Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence):** Mr. Speaker, there are a great many proposals involved in our current review. I am sure that most of them will not be finalized in any respect before the committee has had a chance to make its final report later in the session.

**Mr. MacLean (Queens):** May I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister assure the house that the government is not contemplating the closing down of the R.C.A.F. station at Summerside?

**Mr. Hellyer:** I cannot give a categorical assurance. I do fully appreciate the views of my hon. friend and many other hon. gentlemen, including particularly the Solicitor General, in respect of this proposition, which is

#### *Inquiries of the Ministry*

not one that the government has put forward but which has come from another source.

**Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre):** May I ask a supplementary question of the minister. What other groups have made a proposal that air bases be discontinued in this country? Does this come from foreign sources? Would the minister please advise the house?

**Mr. Hellyer:** I think it comes from the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** That is a complete falsehood, and the minister knows it.

#### PENITENTIARIES

##### ST. VINCENT DE PAUL—REPORTED DELAY IN RECONSTRUCTION

On the orders of the day:

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean L. Rochon (Laval):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of Public Works.

Would he have any comments on the press reports, especially in the Montreal newspapers, to the effect that the prisoners at the St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary complain about the delays in the work now under way?

**Hon. J. P. Deschatelets (Minister of Public Works):** Mr. Speaker, I read various press reports to that effect. The architects of the Department of Public Works have kept a close watch on this work since its inception, and I never heard any report to the effect that delays were occurring.

I understand that this reported complaint about the slowness of the work stems from comments obtained from some inmates. I realize that works on such a large scale in a penitentiary such as St. Vincent de Paul, would be carried out at a slower pace than those of an ordinary building.

In any event, this morning I asked the inspectors of the public works department to send me a report in that respect. Furthermore, we have contacted the warden of the penitentiary and a visit has been scheduled for next Wednesday when, with various architects of the department, we shall go and find out for ourselves.

[Text]

#### CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

##### REPORTED PROVISION OF TRAILERS TO TRUCKING COMPANIES

On the orders of the day:

[Translation]

**Mr. Gerard Laprise (Chapleau):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport.