

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

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THE MID-CANADA LINE

An address by the Minister of National Defence,
Mr. Ralph Campney to the Royal Canadian Army
Pay Corps Association.

I should like to speak to you tonight about the construction of the mid-Canada line which will extend from Labrador westward roughly following the 55th parallel when completed and which will form an integral part of the joint Canada-U.S. continental air defence system. Before doing so, however, perhaps a few words with respect to the whole system would be in order.

The four main elements in the integrated continental air defence system of North America are:

First, the Pinetree System, which ties in to the Canadian and United States air defence commands a basic radar warning and control system, and through extensive communication networks links up the Canadian and United States air interceptor forces.

Second, the mid-Canada line, an early warning line supplementing the Pinetree radar system.

Third, the Distant Early Warning or DEW line across the most northerly practicable part of North America.

Fourth, extensions down both flanks of the continent to prevent outflanking of the transcontinental network by hostile aircraft.

Planning of the system started some years ago, as soon as the thermonuclear threat began to take shape. It was realized at once that effective defensive steps to meet this threat would require the combined effort of both countries, that it would be costly and that its construction would be difficult.

We in Canada also recognized, as members of NATO, that beyond meeting the needs of defence at home it was our duty to assist in the provision of measures for the protection of the industrial potential of North America and of the retaliatory capacity of the United States Strategic Air Force, both of which are of the greatest importance as deterrents of aggression against the free world.

Of the four elements which I mentioned a moment ago, construction of the Pinetree radar system was tackled first. Part of it was constructed by Canada and part by the United States. In October, 1953, when the Pinetree system was becoming operational, a group of Canada-United States scientists and military advisers recommended that additional early warning capacity should be provided. After further consideration by the Chiefs of Staff of both countries, recommendations were made which led to the acceptance by Canada of the responsibility for financing, constructing and operating the