

The Need for Civil Defence

While Canada, with other freedom-loving nations, is making every effort to secure world peace through diplomatic negotiation at the United Nations and by building in NATO a defensive strength that will discourage aggression, we must recognize that the threat of war may continue for a generation or more. If we should be forced to accept war, we would have to accept danger to ourselves at home as well as to our servicemen abroad. It is but the beginnings of common-sense to make reasonable preparations, within the framework of our total defence effort, for the protection of our civilian population and of our essential community services.

There was a time in human history when wars were fought on distant battlefields, far remote from the ordinary work-a-day life of the communities that were being defended. But today, the development of modern weapons has whittled away the security once conferred on us by the simple facts of geography. No longer can we enjoy the sheltered isolation that was our sure protection in the past.

Until very recent years, our obligations of citizenship have been twofold:

- to respect the rule of law in time of peace; and
- to defend our country abroad in time of war.

But in the tragic event of any future war, we may be required for the first time to share in defending our own communities, our own families and our own homes against direct enemy attack. Thus, civil defence has added a third dimension to citizenship.

The most important targets for any possible future enemy attack on Canada would be those localities which make the most vital contribution to the country's war-making capacity. It is not improbable that the first assaults would be made on concentrated industrial areas, key military installations, or centres which are of strategic importance to the nation.

During his recent visit to Ottawa, President Eisenhower reminded us that our security plans must now take into account Soviet ability to employ atomic attack on North America. I need hardly emphasize how vital it would be to have advance warning of enemy attack on any Canadian community. Just as aircraft have broken through the sound barrier, modern weapons have wiped out the time barrier that once afforded a degree of protection. As a result, the warning of such an attack would be measured, not in days or months, but in precious hours and minutes.

Canada's Advance Warning System

Let me take a few minutes to outline the steps that have been taken by the Federal Government so that provincial and local organizations can be alerted to the danger of enemy air attack. Obviously, I cannot for security reasons, discuss in detail the preparations that have been undertaken, but I can roughly outline the sequence of events.