

*The Address—Mrs. Shipley*

It is perhaps a little difficult for Canadians to realize that there is active opposition to NATO within NATO countries, especially abroad. True, the numbers involved are not very great, but it is a very vocal minority. In fact, Lord Ismay stated in his report that a survey shows that 80 per cent of the people in the United States, United Kingdom and France had no idea what the word "NATO" stood for.

In particular, the NATO countries abroad are being bombarded with destructive propaganda and, if they are told again and again that NATO is indeed an offensive organization of nations and we do very little to tell them that it is solely to prevent aggression, we have no one but ourselves to blame that these minorities exist.

The officials of France, from the President down, welcomed us with open arms. We could not begin to accept all the hospitality offered, in the time at our disposal.

As the Minister of National Defence felt that our knowledge of the functions of NATO would be incomplete unless we visited our forces in Europe, the Canadian delegation left France and flew to Germany and visited our army bases there as well as all the air bases in both France and Germany. Before this tour was finished, I was beginning to feel that it was an endurance test because of the number of places we visited and the thousands of people to whom we talked in so short a period of time.

At every base we were shown the living quarters, the recreational and educational facilities, the working facilities and how well the men had been trained. We were given an opportunity to talk, unaccompanied by brass of any kind, to the men and women of all ranks. The only complaint I heard on the whole tour was from several of our men and their wives that they were sorry they could not stay longer.

I was deeply interested in the new permanent married quarters. The highest ranking officers live in quarters identical with those of the newest recruits. They have the same furniture and the same furnishings. The area allotted to each of the men is determined solely by the number of children, and it seems to be working perfectly. Incidentally, whoever was responsible for the selection of the furnishings should be highly complimented. Furnishings, of necessity, must be functional and durable. Nevertheless, the simplicity of design and natural finishes have created homes of undoubted charm. In spite of the fact that the only differences in the apartments are in the colours of walls, rugs and curtains, each has its own individuality.

The schools we visited had just recently been completed and are as fine as or finer than any of our newest schools. However, there is one very important difference: the cost of construction is much less than for a similar building here, because of the difference in the whole economy.

Either we went to visit the municipal authorities in the adjoining towns or they were invited to meet us at the base; and no matter where we went we were met with glowing praise of Canada and Canadians. We had met the same thing in Paris, and previously I had met the same reactions when I visited the United Nations. But I think it is most significant that in Germany this feeling was the same. It must be remembered that our men and women went to Germany as members of the NATO forces and, perhaps partly for this reason, the German people accepted them and became extremely friendly with them, even before there was any question of Germany herself joining the alliance. I asked several burgomasters why they felt so friendly to Canadians. They said we had so much in Canada in the way of land and forests and we were capable of building the best fighting plane in use in Europe today; but, in spite of this, we are not boastful.

They spoke in glowing terms of the wives of the servicemen, and this pleased me very much. It appears that the wives who first went over to join their husbands had to live on the economy of the country because there were no permanent married quarters ready for them. As land is so valuable and scarce in both France and Germany, our bases were situated, in so far as was strategically practicable, in the poorest farming areas. As a consequence, in many cases, the built-up areas nearest to the bases were small villages where there was no modern housing available. They rented quarters in buildings that had no running water. The burgomasters told me they knew the type of streamlined kitchens and other amenities that these wives were used to in Canada, but they did not complain. On the contrary, they and their husbands worked together to make this temporary home as convenient as they could.

I spoke to some of the officers in the various stations about the unusual public relations that seemed to exist wherever we went. They told me that, of course, that was their objective but they were extremely proud of the help they had had from their men and very proud of the job done by the wives.

I spent an evening with one young wife from my own community, and she told me how much she and her husband had learned from this posting abroad with the air force.