

the hope that the detailed consideration of the extremely important matter to which he referred will take place before long.

Interesting as his statement has been, Mr. Speaker, it certainly has not answered a great many of the questions in our minds concerning particularly the North American command, or NORAD, as it is called, and the implications of the action that has been taken by the government in regard to continental defence under that command. I refer to military implications and indeed political implications.

We on this side of the house realize that on a question of this kind which is of such great importance to Canada, to the United States and to NATO, we should act with a maximum degree of unanimity. But before we can secure that unanimity, Mr. Speaker, we must have all the available information and particularly the information with regard to the alteration, if there is any alteration, in the responsibility of the Canadian government for the actions of Canadian troops, and also the relationship of this command to NATO.

I notice that reference has been made to that relationship but not, if I may say so, in a form which gives me any clear indication that this command has any direction relationship to NATO whatever, or not in the sense that that relationship was established after debate and discussion in this house, as was done in so far as sending Canadian troops to Europe was concerned. The information we have received up to the present time has been inadequate, so far as I am concerned. After more complete information has been received I hope all the doubts we have will be removed, and that we on this side of the house will be able to support any move for continental defence in the interests of both countries and therefore in the interests of peace.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, if I may say a further word, my hon. friend says there was not sufficiently full information placed before the house, and I feel I should answer that immediately so there will be no misunderstanding.

I would like to point out that those who served in the cabinet of the present the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. St. Laurent) had full information on this matter. Indeed as far back as May 11, 1956, there was an agreement between the chiefs of staff to refer to the joint study group the integration of operational control of the continental air defence of the United States and Canada in peacetime. They supported the principle of a single commander under collective security arrangements which had been well

established by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, with the examples of the supreme allied commander in Europe and the supreme allied commander for the Atlantic having operational control over all assigned forces.

I would also like to point this out in answer to my hon. friend. He may not have had the information, but these things occurred during the time the government of which he was a member was in power. On the 18th day of February, 1957, after full consideration of the matter, the then minister of national defence recommended the establishment of an integrated operational control system for the air defence of Canada, the United States and Alaska under a single commander, with a reminder that the United States should recognize "the need for adequate consultation with the Canadian authorities on matters which might lead to the alerting of the air defence system". He spoke for the cabinet on that occasion.

On February 28, 1957, the minister asked that the deputy commander should be a Canadian, and he stated at that time that he anticipated government approval would be given to the arrangement, which "we" brought into effect, on the 15th day of March, 1957.

However, on that date the matter was withdrawn and on March 24, on instructions from the then minister of national defence, officers proceeded to Washington to advise the United States chiefs of staff that there was no disagreement on the part of the then government regarding the plan but that it would not be possible to give formal approval, for it was intimated that the matter might become a political issue and it was not considered advisable to have the formal approval until such time as it was not a political issue. So on the 26th day of April the then minister of national defence cleared a dispatch to the United States pointing out that a decision, while there was no probability of any change, could not be expected until June 15.

I thought my hon. friend must have forgotten those facts—

Some hon. Members: Oh, no.

Mr. Diefenbaker: —because they deal comprehensively with the arrangements which were entered into.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, perhaps in view of the importance of this matter and in view of the facts or the details put on the record by the Prime Minister in the statement he has just now made, I might be permitted to add a word.

I think if the Prime Minister will do a little more research into the proceedings of the cabinet defence committee and the cabinet