

preliminary stage of this kind, there should be such an important stage as turning over to a joint command under a United States general the operational control of the R.C.A.F.

On the other point, the minister is quite correct when he says this matter has been under consideration for a year or two. That consideration was being given, I believe, interdepartmentally as well as departmentally. The minister will also agree that that consideration which has extended over such a long time is evidence of the important nature of this problem. That consideration was not completed until, I believe, the early part of this year and no cabinet consideration of any kind was given to the results of that consideration until a meeting to which the minister has referred and not by the previous administration. The decision that was then taken was the political decision putting into some kind of effective action the result of the interdepartmental considerations which had taken place over a period of a couple of years.

Mr. JONES: Do I understand Mr. Pearson is inclined to believe the cabinet of his government did not concern themselves with this problem of North American defence.

Mr. PEARSON: No. This particular study of the question of a joint command had extended over many months and had not been considered by any previous administration; it was not considered in any way, shape or form by the previous cabinet.

Mr. SMITH (*Calgary South*): But it had been studied interdepartmentally?

Mr. PEARSON: Yes, for a long time.

Mr. SMITH (*Hastings-Frontenac*): If it were a matter of life or death, or attack over the north lands, and that was appreciated by the previous government, why did it take two or three years to do this?

Mr. PEARSON: Because under the previous government pretty good operational arrangements had been made for coordination of defence activities. This proposal is not one which only coordinates. It is unification. I think if there had been an emergency before this joint command went into effect there would have been swift and effective methods taken to deal with it which had been approved by the departments of national defence of both governments up to that time.

Mr. JONES: But not politically.

Mr. PEARSON: Yes. But they did not involve the putting of any Canadian forces under non-Canadian command.

Mr. JONES: You said this could operate quickly in the face of danger. Now, in view of the great rapidity with which attack can be delivered on this country are you saying that the type of arrangement which was set up by the previous government was such that before Canadian forces could rise into the air cabinet consideration had to be taken?

Mr. PEARSON: No. I did not say that, and I do not think anything I said could be interpreted in that way. I said the previous arrangements involved cooperation and coordination between the air defence forces of both countries but the present arrangements involve unification of command.

Mr. JONES: How was it proposed to get Canadian forces off the ground in the case of attack? How was political control to be obtained under the previous governmental arrangements?

Mr. PEARSON: Perhaps I should not attempt to answer this. The Canadian defence forces were then under complete control of the Canadian government; they were not subject to any control of the kind about which we are speaking now. The authority was in the government.