

Supply—National Defence

Mr. Pearkes: The Canadian brigade is under the command of the commander of the NATO forces in Europe. I presume that eventually the Canadian forces will be equipped with atomic weapons under the same terms as the other NATO contingents under SACEUR which may also be equipped with atomic weapons. There may be a difference—I say may be—in connection with nuclear weapons which are stored in the United Kingdom as opposed to those which are readily available in Europe under the control of SACEUR for the troops under their control.

Mr. Pearson: If I may pursue this matter just a little further, the minister has just said it is contemplated that in due course the Canadian brigade will be in the same position as other members of the NATO forces in regard to the possession, use and control of atomic weapons. I would point out that this would mean, if it were to be taken literally, that all the members of NATO with forces in Europe would have to be in the same position as the United Kingdom, which has already made an agreement with the United States putting the United Kingdom in a special position in this matter. I take it that the minister does not mean that.

The fact surely must be that if the United Kingdom now receives atomic weapons from the United States and those atomic weapons are moved to France or Germany by the United Kingdom for use by its NATO contingent, then the weapons are already under the complete control of the United Kingdom government because of the agreement made with the United States. My question was whether the Canadian position would be the same in respect of any such weapons which might be made available to us by the United States. The minister said we would be in the same position as the other NATO governments. Unless we are in the same position as the United Kingdom we will still be in an inferior position in regard to the control of those weapons.

Mr. Pearkes: As I have said, I cannot make any firm statement until the negotiations have been completed. It would be quite foolish, as I am sure the Leader of the Opposition will recognize, for one to make any firm commitment or to give a definite answer to his question until these negotiations have been completed.

Now, I wonder whether the Leader of the Opposition is confusing the agreement so far as the United Kingdom is concerned with those nuclear weapons which are placed in the United Kingdom for use by the forces

of the United Kingdom in the United Kingdom, and not those forces which are actually under SACEUR in Europe.

Mr. Pearson: I was not confusing those two things in my own mind, but I am not going to press the minister. He has said they are in the midst of these negotiations and he is unable, while the negotiations are going on, to give the committee information concerning those negotiations in any specific way. I brought this up because of its importance and also because a statement was made in the house—I think it was toward the end of May—that we had already made arrangements with the United States in regard to the exchange of atomic information which put Canada in a special position.

As a matter of fact, looking at that agreement at that time it was clear that Canada was included with West Germany, Turkey and the Netherlands as NATO countries eligible for the information and equipment needed for the training of forces in the use of atomic weapons, but we were not put in the same position as the United Kingdom. I think that was the inference taken from it in some quarters in this country. The minister says it is impossible to tell us at this time whether those negotiations, now going on, will carry this one stage further and put Canada in exactly the same position as the United Kingdom in the use of nuclear weapons of United States manufacture so far as control is concerned. If our forces in Europe are to have atomic weapons it surely is important to know whether our forces are going to have complete control over those weapons. Nothing could be more important than that. If the minister feels he cannot give any further information at this time in respect of this matter because of the negotiations, then I am not going to press him any further this morning.

Mr. Pearkes: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the remarks he has made and for the concern he feels with regard to who should have control of these weapons. These matters are under very active consideration and are subjects of negotiation with the United States at the present time. The hon. member's views will be borne in mind.

Mr. Regnier: Mr. Chairman, I should like to congratulate the Minister of National Defence for his clear exposé of the war situation and our state of preparedness to meet a possible attack. I want to congratulate him especially on the fact that for the first time since the last war there is a realistic plan for civil defence. I was much impressed by the statement he made yesterday with regard to the national survival training which is