

*Alleged Lack of Government Leadership*

that contention. But the Prime Minister wants some more categorical statements from this side as to our defence policy even though he, as the head of a government, refuses to tell us what his defence policy is. There seems to be no way at all by which we can force this government to undertake its primary responsibility of telling this house and the people what exactly its policy is in national defence at the present time. They just will not do it. They are drifting along hoping for the best and hoping they can continue to drift until after the day of the election—and that is not going to be far ahead now.

This afternoon the Prime Minister did not have anybody else to clarify or interpret his remarks, so he attempted to do that himself. He attempted to clarify—I think the word he used was “simplify”—his earlier stand. His earlier stand certainly needs both simplification and clarification. I defy anyone to get either simplification or clarification or, indeed, intelligence from the Prime Minister's statement today as to what the defence policy of this government is. He rambled around a good deal. He attempted to throw some light into dark corners. But he did not succeed in any way, shape or form in reconciling the differences, which are now out in the open, and obvious, between himself and the former minister of national defence. Those differences were made very clear last night by the minister when he appeared before a television press conference. And I may add that the stand taken by the former minister last night can hardly be attributed to the Liberal propaganda machine.

Then, apparently in an attempt to justify his own position in this matter, whatever that may be, the Prime Minister struck a blow for civilian control of defence policy. It should not be necessary to repeat in this house or in any democratic assembly in a sovereign state that civilian control of military and defence policy is essential. It has been so in our country. It will continue to be so, as well as, I hope, in all free countries.

As the Prime Minister said this afternoon—I think I am quoting him correctly—“The business of defence is too serious to be left to the generals”. Presumably it requires civilians. But the former minister of national defence had something to say about that, too, last night in his television broadcast. He indicated that the business of defence is also too serious to be left to people who do not know anything about it and who are not experts in it.

Then the Prime Minister, in order to justify this government's policy of drift and delay, which has been going on for so long in defence, this afternoon repeats what he tried

to convince us was the situation a week or so ago, namely that there have been two recent developments which require further delay. He referred this afternoon, once again, to the NATO council meeting in Ottawa in May—and we shall be very glad indeed to welcome that NATO council to Ottawa in May—and the Nassau declaration, the declaration by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Our Prime Minister said once again that this declaration places our role in NATO and in continental and collective defence in some doubt—that it may be changed. It is strange indeed that one of the parties to that declaration, the United States itself, denies that any such result will flow from that declaration. I should not need to say anything more about this, because the minister of national defence took that view last night, and he ought to know. So far as the NATO meeting is concerned, are we now in a position in this country when the re-examination, reconsideration and renegotiation, if you like, of our defence policy is to be made in May of 1963 at a NATO council meeting in Ottawa without this parliament knowing anything at all about the proposals the government is placing before that council?

Of course this is just a smokescreen. We all know that. Some of us know something about how the NATO council operates. This is the spring meeting of the NATO council. It will last for a couple of days at the most. Here in fact this NATO council meeting in Ottawa is going to re-examine and revise Canadian policy. We are in February now, Mr. Speaker. Believe me, the government of this country should have some indication of what that renegotiation and revision is. Of course they have not any indication of it. They have no proposals for that purpose. However, they are using this council meeting as an excuse for further delay. They hope they can get beyond the election period without having to say anything about this matter. They blame it on Nassau. They blame it on NATO.

**Mr. Green:** Of course that is not true.

**Mr. Hellyer:** It is true; it is the truth and the whole truth.

**Mr. Pearson:** There are, of course, some negotiations going on. We do not know about any negotiations going on with NATO. But we do not know about negotiations going on as a result of Nassau with Canada. We know, of course, that the whole question of a NATO nuclear deterrent is under review now. It did not take a Nassau communique to tell us that. In December, 1957, the NATO council committed itself to the use of nuclear tactical