

Supply—National Defence

I think those views should be very much in our mind as we contemplate the policy to be followed by the Canadian government in this matter. Last February 24, I believe, the Prime Minister stated that the government considered that Canada's forces should be provided with modern and efficient weapons. But he went on to say that it was expedient that ownership and custody of nuclear warheads in Canada, and presumably also in Europe, should remain with the United States. This view of the government is confirmed on page 7 of the white paper, and I quoted this yesterday, where it is said that ownership and custody of nuclear weapons required for Canadian defence forces will remain with the United States.

So I should like to have it more clearly stated than has already been done what will be the exact, precise effect of the negotiations which are now being undertaken by the Canadian government with the United States government on the subject of the use of American nuclear weapons by Canadian forces. The commander of the Canadian brigade in Europe, and he was merely echoing what General Norstad had said more than once, said, and I quoted this yesterday: Our defence plans are based on the nuclear weapon.

Presumably he is referring to Canadian defence plans in Europe where the Canadian brigade is part of the NATO forces, and if those defence plans are based on the nuclear weapon what is the capability of the brigade in France in respect of those weapons? A correspondent of the *Globe and Mail* who visited the brigade last March wrote an article from Soest in which he made the statement—perhaps the minister will be able to comment on its accuracy—that there is no such capability now available for the Canadian brigade. That was last March, and I am quoting from this article of March 25 which appeared in the *Globe and Mail*. It reads:

They—

That is the brigade.

—have no nuclear weapons now. Although they will this year receive one-half a battery of Lacrosse 20-mile, ground to ground missiles (a battery contains four launchers of 12 missiles each), they will not have the atomic warheads for them and do not know when they will get them.

Nor do they have the cross-country armoured personnel carriers and the helicopters need for atomic warfare. The army has asked for them but so far the government has declined to say yes or no.

Again, he says:

The Canadians do not have the atomic weapons to defeat an attack, and there are not enough of them to stop an attack without atomic weapons.

[Mr. Pearson.]

He goes on:

What the brigade needs, according to its officers, are about 400 bobcats (tracked, armoured personnel carriers), 10 heavy transport helicopters, six light reconnaissance helicopters, about six Otter short take-off aircraft, and miscellaneous electronic equipment such as infrared radar. The cost would be about \$5 million.

More important, perhaps, the brigade needs a political decision on what kind of war it is expected to fight. If it is to have both a nuclear and conventional weapons capability, then its manpower strength must be increased substantially. If it is committed to nuclear war alone, then it must have the warheads on the spot through arrangements either with the United States or Britain.

Now, Mr. Chairman, this is of course an extremely important matter, and I hope the minister will be able to clear up this morning the exact position of our forces in regard to the use of nuclear weapons, and the exact position of negotiations with the United States; what those negotiations are expected to accomplish and whether, if those negotiations are successful, the statement made by the government earlier through the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence will have to be modified accordingly. I refer to the statement to the effect that ownership and custody of nuclear warheads in Canada should remain with the United States.

Mr. Pearkes: I think the Leader of the Opposition made a slight slip in referring to the brigade being in France. The brigade is all stationed in Germany.

Now, regarding the position of the supply of nuclear weapons, it was stated by the Prime Minister in the house on February 20 that problems connected with arming the Canadian brigade in Europe with short range nuclear weapons for NATO defence tasks are also being studied. These studies are continuing and are fast reaching a stage when there can be an exchange of notes of this matter. The negotiations have not been completed at the present time, and I do not think it would be helpful to make any firm statement until these negotiations have been completed. When they are completed, I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that if the house is in session a statement will be made in this house.

Mr. Pearson: I realize that the minister cannot, in the midst of negotiations, make an announcement in regard to the details of those negotiations. My question was a little broader than that. Could he inform the committee whether the purpose of those negotiations—that is all I am asking about—is to put Canada on exactly the same basis as the United Kingdom is vis-à-vis the United States in regard to atomic weapons and the exchange of information with the United States regarding atomic weapons?