

*National Defence Act Amendment*

Defence McNamara that there is a massive superiority of tactical nuclear weapons in the hands of the Americans and their allies. Our contribution to that particular form of defence is militarily completely useless.

We also believe that our air division in Europe is vulnerable and therefore useless. Worse than that, in times of tension it is positively provocative because at present our air division sits on the plains of western Germany with Russian missiles trained on them and in the event of any grave tension in Europe, although such an occurrence does not seem likely at the present time, the incentive toward early destruction of these air forces would be a possible provocation to an action that would tend to escalate rapidly into a full scale nuclear war.

We say that these particular contributions are no longer appropriate to Canada. They are not needed. I defy the minister, or any representative of the minister, to pronounce a single useful purpose that is being served by these particular forces. It is suggested that perhaps they perform a political service, and I want to deal with that a little later.

I come now to another commitment we have made, the commitment to the air defences of North America. I propose to refer to evidence in the defence committee where distinguished military men have stated that in their opinion this is an obsolete form of defence. In the age of missiles an attack by manned bombers on North America is so improbable that you have to assume complete insanity on the part of some enemy, and of course the only enemy in this field would be the U.S.S.R. There is not the slightest sign that such a threat is a real one and, Mr. Chairman, we should not be continuing a form of organization which prevents us from doing the things that are vitally essential where our major contribution can be made to the security of the world.

Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, the defence committee considered Bill C-243 after second reading. I hope the Minister of National Defence and the government now realize the foolishness of the decision to require the examination of this highly technical subject by the committee after rather than before second reading. What happened? Positions were solidified. Every representative on that committee showed a complete inflexibility of view.

It would be less than frank for me to say what I was looking for as the evidence was given to the committee were matters that

[Mr. Brewin.]

would justify the stand we have seen fit to take in the House of Commons on second reading. I would say of the government members on the committee that not a single question or intervention they made seemed to have any other purpose but wholesale support of the bill and nothing but the bill. At the same time the official opposition made their views very clear, and instead of having a calm, objective examination of the merits of the bill we had a continuation in the defence committee of a political wrangle and a strengthening of political opinions.

● (6:30 p.m.)

I hope we will not do that again. It was said that for some sort of practical reason it was inevitable that we had to have second reading first. I say it was a mistake that the sort of matters which the minister and other witnesses brought before the committee could not have been brought before the committee in a totally different atmosphere, in an atmosphere where we had not been committed to a particular stand before we had an opportunity to examine the situation in detail. Therefore, instead of having a consensus we were forced into a situation in which all members of the committee were taking sides one way or another, without being able to withdraw from the entrenched positions which had been taken on second reading.

Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, we did receive a very great deal of evidence. In my view we received a great deal of useful and worth while evidence. However, as I see it, that evidence has established the point I am trying to make to the committee now; it has made the point abundantly clear. None of those who were opposed to unification—including representatives of TRIO, the group which has opposed unification on behalf of many retired officers of the service—denied that unification would be an appropriate form of organization if we were to confine our role to that of a single mobile intervention force.

Yet the whole weight of the evidence established that, so long as we continue to have, for example, an army brigade isolated from other services and an air division operating solely as an air division, then the disturbance created by a new form of organization certainly is not worth while. This point was made with greater clarity by General Moncel than by any other witness who appeared before the committee. I should like to refer to some of his evidence. General Moncel I believe is well known to members of this house. He is a very distinguished officer who had a