

North Atlantic Treaty

Naturally the people of Canada look to the Minister of National Defence to tell them the facts and to inform them with regard to the defence situation and the things that we are doing. The statement in regard to the construction of barracks and the statement in regard to the construction of airfields, and the cost of those barracks and of those airfields, are things about which every Canadian is naturally greatly interested. Most of all the elected representatives of the people sitting here in this house have an interest and a duty in connection with such statements. But his statements over there have gone further than that. In explaining what Canada was doing in connection with the air, I find that in another Canadian Press dispatch from Rotterdam there is a reference to the eleven squadrons and to the part they are going to play. I quote from a Canadian Press dispatch from Rotterdam, of November 21, referring to the statement of the Minister of National Defence:

Claxton told reporters that the production of Sabre jets at Montreal is the biggest phase of Canada's arms production. He said the Sabre can and does lick the Russian-built MIG-15 daily in Korea.

I think that those who have seen the Sabre jet in operation know that it is an immensely powerful aircraft with great speed. But I think that it is important to keep a sense of proportion in regard to these matters. I think the Canadian people should keep all our participation in a true perspective, and that the perspective should be properly delineated by the Minister of National Defence above all others. On the very same day that the minister was making in Rotterdam that statement which conveyed the impression of the superiority of the Sabre jet, the commander of the United States air force was making a statement in Washington which is something that should be in the minds of everyone if there is any thought of complacency. I quote from an Associated Press dispatch from Washington dated November 21:

The Chinese communist air force has deployed in North China and Manchuria about 1,500 planes, approximately one-half of which are MIG-15 jet fighters. The MIG "in many respects can outperform our own F-86"; it has outclimbed the best airplanes that have been tested against it and performed in combat at altitudes approaching 50,000 feet.

The MIG can fly "at speeds in excess of the speed of sound."

That is a quotation from an Associated Press dispatch from Washington on the same day as the other statement was made in Rotterdam. The reliability of these statements of the Minister of National Defence with regard to matters of defence assumes increasing importance; and I submit that the points of privilege which were raised in this house in respect of the statements as to policy and

to commitments have not been answered by the Prime Minister, although I am sure the Prime Minister has fully interpreted the statement made to him by the Minister of National Defence. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that there is still much to be explained to this house as to why the Minister of National Defence was making statements of that kind in Europe, when the elected representatives of the people have not had an opportunity to pass on those extremely important decisions.

Mr. St. Laurent: I am not going to attempt any controversy on the accuracy or otherwise of the statements I received from the Minister of National Defence as contrasted with statements which have appeared in dispatches in the press. I obtained this information from the Minister of National Defence. I take it to be accurate, and I am putting it before the house as such.

With respect to the construction of barracks, I am afraid that the leader of the opposition did not read the whole of this clipping or dispatch from The Hague of November 20. In it there is this statement:

In a talk with reporters aboard an RCAF plane which flew him swiftly on a three-stop flight around western Europe, the minister said the barracks will be built by Germans, the work to start in the next few months and be completed late next year.

It is Canada's hope that a way can be found to prevent the Canadian government from becoming a land owner in Germany, that is, that this would become part of her contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization without remaining Canadian property.

It seems to me that that is quite in line with our expectation that we are going to have to provide our share of the cost of construction but that it is no part of our policy to become owners of military establishments in continental Europe.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to extend this discussion because there is, of course, a much more extensive report than has been referred to by either of us. But I would point out with reference to that particular point that the minister has made a definite statement there, if the report is correct, that Canada is going ahead to build within the next few months barracks in the Soest area of western Germany and as far as the minister's statement goes it is the expressed hope that through some arrangement still to be made Canada may be able to claim that as part of our contribution under NATO.

That is a very different thing from making a contribution under NATO and having the installation built by NATO and under NATO direction. There has as yet been neither an announcement of policy in this house nor an opportunity for the members of this house to express any opinion in regard to Canada