

Mr. KNOWLES (*Winnipeg North Centre*): How was that decision in principle recorded?

Mr. SMITH (*Hastings-Frontenac*): I am unable to tell you because I was not there at the time. Moreover, if I did know, and if I were in cabinet, I would not disclose it.

Mr. SMITH (*Calgary South*): I think it has been said as a principle that we should approve a unified command, and I cannot help but wonder from the line of questioning, if it is not the principle that is the concern of the hon. member's (Mr. Knowles) questioning. But let us assume for the sake of argument that the principle is generally agreed to. I think surely what must have happened and has happened many times since, is that this was basically, to begin with, what it always must be, a military consideration.

It really then becomes a case of reviewing defence commitments, with the assurance that they are going to be military first, and political second, assuming of course that the first is to be satisfied, and then designating what the military agreement should be, or what shall be agreed to.

As I see this, I think the fact is that it is an example—let us take one element and get into it: that Canada should play a certain part, certainly if the considerations are military considerations. Certainly in the initial consideration, that is the military consideration which was later confirmed by political agreement, it seems to me the only criticism which perhaps could be levied, in view of the minister's statement, is the question of the time it has taken after the agreement was made until the time it was interpreted by an exchange of notes at the political level. I would hate to think the question would be determined at the political level without consideration as to whether or not it was feasible from a military standpoint. Naturally the chief of the air staff and General Norstad had to give consideration to it from the practical aspect of what was required from a military standpoint, and that has been explained here by the defence minister. It then became a question for consideration by the two governments at a political level. I suggested that is the rule rather than the exception and we place considerably more importance on the delay which has occurred since that time than on the political agreement which was presented to the house.

Mr. PEARSON: Mr. Chairman, if I may say a word, I do not know whether I am following the inductive or the deductive method in what I am going to say; but I do not quite agree with Mr. Smith. I feel it must have been the case that the Department of National Defence here and the Department of Defence in the United States agreed on this command before it went to the cabinet; that would be the normal course, and I am sure it was followed in this instance. But, once the decision was made in the cabinet, as the minister has said, it became a political decision. As the Minister of National Defence has said in the House of Commons today the political decision resulted in the setting up of this command and also in the appointment of a commander and a deputy commander who, according to Mr. Pearkes, have their authority from both governments.

Therefore my worry, and it is a genuine one, is not that military consideration was not given to it prior to the political decision, but rather as to the exact nature of that political decision. I am not particularly concerned as to how it was arrived at because if it were a cabinet decision all the departments concerned would have had an opportunity in cabinet, through their minister, to express their views about it. But what we have now is a document appointing a Canadian deputy commander of the unified command, but we do not know what that command is. Perhaps we will not know until the exchange of notes between the two governments is completed; but meanwhile I assume on the basis of some authority and interim arrangement, or whatever you may wish