

NORAD—Canada-U.S. Agreement

Mr. Pearson: Would the hon. gentleman permit a question. Would he, then, explain the meaning in paragraph 3 of the agreement—and I ask merely for clarification—of the word “temporary”. I quote:

Temporary reinforcement from one area to another, including the crossing of the international boundary to meet operation requirements will be within the authority of commanders having operational control.

Mr. Pearkes: Certainly. That might be interpreted as one of the cases where a squadron of the United States air force might move across the Canadian border and operate temporarily, for a short period during an emergency, from an airfield in Canada.

Mr. Pearson: Only during an emergency?

Mr. Pearkes: It might be done by arrangement between the governments on an occasion such as an exercise which is being carried out by joint arrangement.

Some question has been raised regarding a statement I made in the house about the means of communication, when I said “by telephone or other means”. Perhaps I should have enlarged upon that. I can tell the house that I have on several occasions taken up the telephone in my office and by calling a definite number I have been able to talk to the duty officer or to General Partridge himself at Colorado Springs, and it has never taken me more than 40 seconds to get that connection. So there are no great difficulties presented in that respect. As I have emphasized frequently, consultation must take place beforehand, and there would be little more than clearance given during an emergency. The hon. Leader of the Opposition suggested during the course of his remarks that the SAC air force would act on, and I think he said only on, the advice or information obtained through the warning systems of this continent. Of course, there are other means and other circumstances that might well arise which might permit the President of the United States to use those forces.

The Leader of the Opposition quoted a press dispatch regarding the number of Canadians who are employed at Colorado Springs, and the number of squadrons which would be made available to NORAD. The number of squadrons or units which can be made available to the NORAD command is laid down definitely in paragraph 2 of the note, and it says there:

The North American air defence command will include such combat units and individuals as are specifically allocated to it by the two governments.

No squadrons of the R.C.A.F. have yet been allocated to NORAD. The Leader of the Opposition quoted the number six. He knows

[Mr. Pearkes.]

as well as I do that there are nine fighter squadrons in the Royal Canadian Air Force air defence command. I do not know how he produced this magic number of six. As I say, no squadrons have yet been definitely and specifically allocated to NORAD, nor would it seem likely that any such squadrons of the Royal Canadian Air Force would be allocated in that way. The hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) suggested that possibly Canadian squadrons might be sent to the assistance of the United States in order to take part in some operation in Mexico or over the Mexican border. He mentioned other places, too. It would be practically impossible, on account of the location of our fighter squadrons and the type of aircraft that they have, for Canada to render that sort of assistance to the United States air force.

May I call it ten o'clock?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Before the hon. minister resumes his seat I should like to take advantage of the suggestion of the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Pallett), and in accordance with what I told the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Smith) I would do, I now put on the record—

Mr. Speaker: Has the hon. member for Essex East the consent of the house to answer the question?

Some hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Martin (Essex East):—what the minister did say the next day. As reported on page 34 of the transcript of the proceedings of the external affairs committee on December 5, 1957, the Secretary of State for External Affairs spoke as follows:

I said on Tuesday—and I quote from the minutes, the typewritten script, as follows:

“So far as this department is concerned—and I say this very emphatically—so far as this department is concerned—we have not been brought into this picture whatever. This has been a discussion on a military basis. This department deals with the political aspect of it. I could argue that it is clear in the context; but to make it abundantly clear, I say to the committee—and I offer this in all frankness—that I mean it in the military context, and in the military context it is true.

Military matters have been the responsibility of the Minister of National Defence and I have no knowledge of them. But regarding the political context in August or earlier, my department's involvement indeed goes back for two years under the former government. My department had at the time when the decision with respect to NORAD was taken—it had as its minister the right hon. the Prime Minister and he, in the Department of External Affairs and the government were seized of it, and they acted on the political aspects. That is the clarification I would like to make in that context.

Mr. Smith (Hastings-Frontenac): Thank you, that was the question I was about to ask.