

Supply—National Defence

public archives has made a survey of public and other records that are available for such a history, and I am now informed that they will obtain any further information of a historical nature which Sergeant Closs is able to give. The hon. member will recall that he mentioned Sergeant Closs. I wish to thank the hon. member for his very useful suggestion.

NORTHLAND NAVIGATION COMPANY

INQUIRY AS TO STRIKE SITUATION

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Labour. In view of the fact that British Columbia members of the house have received telegrams this morning from the provincial federation of labour relative to the strike in Vancouver involving the Northland Navigation Company, is the minister yet in a position to make a report on the investigation which he told us was under way?

Hon. Michael Starr (Minister of Labour): No, Mr. Speaker, I have had no word on the investigation that is going on.

Mr. Winch: As soon as information is available will the minister make a statement to the house?

Mr. Starr: Absolutely.

SUPPLY

The house in committee of supply, Mr. Rea in the chair.

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

214. Departmental administration, \$3,380,550.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, I should like to follow up a matter which we discussed yesterday, the question of the use by Canadian forces of tactical nuclear weapons, in order to find out if possible exactly where we stand in respect of this vitally important question. It becomes a matter of immediate importance in view of the fact that the R.C.A.F. is soon to be equipped in part with missiles which will have a nuclear capability, and our brigade group in France will presumably be equipped with weapons which have the same capability.

I should like to draw to the minister's attention, if he has not already seen it, an article in the *London Times* of April 13 by their defence correspondent which is entitled, "Latest Trend in Atomic Weapons". The author of the article is obviously a man who writes with both knowledge and authority. He has this to say in the article in question:

It is an uneconomic business to make small weapons of this kind—

Small atomic weapons.

—since low yields can only be produced by using fissile material as inefficiently as possible.

Perhaps I might interpolate there to say that my information is that not only do low yields require inefficient use of material but, relatively speaking, the lower the yield the greater the fall-out; in other words, the smaller the atomic weapon the dirtier, as the expression is, the weapon. The article goes on to say:

Why then are the Americans making smaller instead of bigger bangs for a buck? The impulse comes from the military requirement for atomic weapons which can be used in air defence, and at close range on the battlefield—

Then again in the article:

With the advent of nuclear parity making total war suicidal, public opinion is finding it easier to envisage limited war. The question is, could atomic weapons be used in a limited war without its spiralling into a total nuclear war? Theoretically, it is the way in which atomic weapons are used—tactically, against an enemy's armed forces in the field, or strategically, against his war effort as a whole—that ought to matter, and not the power of the weapons used. But in practice the public and the politicians are likely to find it easier to contemplate the use of small weapons than of big.

I know the dilemma this involves, which we mentioned yesterday. The minister said, and I do not take issue with him, that it would be an intolerable position to send Canadian forces into action not having the most effective arms that can be secured. I am talking now about tactical weapons. But as this writer points out, the danger would be that the use of these tactical weapons on the battlefield might spiral into the final use of the ultimate weapon.

The minister himself, as I mentioned yesterday, has more than once expressed the fear that this would happen. Therefore before you can arm any unit with even the smallest atomic weapon you have to contemplate the possibility of the use of that weapon degenerating into the use of the larger nuclear weapon. This writer concludes his very interesting and important article as follows:

A most careful balance will therefore have to be kept between atomic and conventional weapons, however attractive the former may seem at first sight. Our aim—

Presumably he means the United Kingdom aim.

—in equipping our forces with tactical atomic weapons ought to be primarily deterrence: first, to deter an attack from taking place at all, and, secondly to deter an enemy from exploiting his superior numbers, if he does nevertheless attack. The actual use of tactical atomic weapons ought to be considered a last resort, not so much for fear that it might lead to total war as for doubt about the outcome of a limited atomic war.