

terms of conventional weapons. Would Senator Lafond agree that if the Soviet Bloc does not use its weaponry, it is not using it because of the U.S. nuclear deterrent?

Senator Roblin said that in order to have an effective voice, we must pull our weight. Using that same logic, that means we should have a nuclear deterrent ourselves; is that what he means? I should also like to ask Senator Roblin: Does he extend his thinking that if we do not do it ourselves, someone else will do it to the point of saying that we must not let the Americans perform the defence tasks they perform on behalf of Canada, and perform them all ourselves?

Senator Lafond: Honourable senators, at no time would I assume that I know what the potential enemy thinks or that I know what the potential enemy will do in one instance or another. I can only recommend that we keep our guard up and be ready to react to whatever he decides to do at any given time.

Senator Roblin: Honourable senators, I think it would be courteous to try to answer the two questions put to me by Senator Gigantès.

These questions involve matters of definition. When you talk about pulling your weight, you are speaking in terms that have to be defined, and I agree with that. I think Senator Gigantès is dealing with that point.

Canada, unlike our three major allies—the United States, Great Britain and France—long ago decided it would not have a nuclear capability. Therefore, I think that pulling our weight has to do with the conventional effort. No one expects us to pull our weight in the nuclear field. Our decision has been a matter of policy. It was decided long ago that that would not be our role. We have accepted responsibility in the field of conventional warfare and that is the area in which I think we should pull our weight.

Honourable senators, I have to admit that the United States defends the whole of western society by virtue of its control of the nuclear weapon deterrent. Given that the United States is the country that wields that particular weapon or, indeed, is the body which is really orchestrating the policy of deterrence, then that is their field of operation. I would expect that no Canadian would think that our sovereignty is infringed on that account.

In the area of conventional weapons, there is a suggestion that we should have a more acceptable posture. It seems to me that we do not do this entirely in isolation from our allies. We have always done this in co-operation with our allies, particularly with respect to the United States, NORAD being the principal example. I expect we always will. That is what an alliance is all about.

There is a substantial area in which we conduct joint operations. Where we do not have the paramount input, it is obvious that we are not going to have the paramount word.

There is a world of difference between that situation and doing nothing at all to the extent that we are being defended by someone else without bearing any of the costs involved. That is a position which I think would be dangerous for

[Senator Gigantès.]

anyone who has any regard for our sovereignty and our national posture.

● (1530)

Honourable senators, we are not a warlike people. We are not militarists. We do not want to have vast armaments. We want to keep them to as low a degree as we possibly can, and it is a matter of judgment as to where we go. We are simply saying in this committee that we think the country has neglected this responsibility to a considerable extent in the past. I think that we are suggesting, in military terms, at least, a rather modest change in our position. It will not be modest in terms of money—heaven knows that is true. It will cost a lot of money, and we do not readily see at the moment when we will be able to fit that into our budgetary situation. I declare that to be the case, but it does not mean that we should not consider these matters thoughtfully and try to find that balance of judgment as to what we ought to do and where we ought to stand. That is the sort of thing the committee is trying to approach.

At the same time, I repeat what I said before: I am quite certain that we do not have the best answer. I hope it is a better answer than we have had so far. I welcome the intervention of those who would like to ask us to think again or to widen the scope of our consideration of these matters, because I do not think we have any pride of authorship. We are quite willing to be braced with any form of discussion, criticism or suggestion that members of this chamber or, indeed, the general public might wish to offer.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, as no other senator wishes to participate, this order is considered to have been debated.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, a few moments ago I had word that the debate in the other place on Bill C-47 was going to continue until at least 4 o'clock. It was my intention to ask the Senate to adjourn until approximately 3.55 so that notice of Royal Assent could be given.

Within the last 45 seconds, however, I have been informed that Bill C-47 has been passed in the House of Commons. I still do not know whether it is the intention in the other place to pass any more bills. As I understand the rules, however, private members' hour begins in the house at 4 o'clock. It is now 3.45. I would therefore move that the Senate adjourn during pleasure for a maximum of 10 minutes, after which we will reassemble at the call of the bell.

The Senate adjourned during pleasure.

At 4 p.m. the sitting was resumed.