

Supply—National Defence

He was stating a clear and simple proposition that in the reality of warfare that we face today the only way we can hope to preserve the peace is to regard this situation with all the cold reality which it demands and to say to ourselves that we cannot hope to let nuclear forces be developed into larger forces behind the ramparts of the sacrifices of other nations which would bear the first impact of war of the modern type. When one examines the figures we have before us, which I am inclined to think the intelligence branch of the government will say are below rather than above the reality of the Russian strength, he must recognize our position when aircraft can fly thousands of miles and return to their bases after dropping their bomb loads, or, perhaps even more dangerous, dropping their loads of armed men.

I can only repeat the request I have made of the Minister of National Defence on the two earlier occasions when these estimates were before us, that he give us information and, through us, give the people of Canada information so that we may know what our position actually is. The people of this country will support this government in every effective step that is necessary to preserve the peace for which the people have paid so great a price. Having paid that price the people have the right to know, in much more detail than they know today, what armed forces in being will result from the expenditures that are to be made this year, and what we can actually expect our armed forces to be ready to do as one of the members of that great community organized together in the cause of peace, whose preparations are only for the purpose of preserving peace.

It is with that thought in mind, and only with that thought in mind, it is with the knowledge of the dreadful reality with which we are confronted today, that I repeat my request that the Minister of National Defence give us the kind of information that is available to the people of the United States, where secrecy is surely just as important as it is here; to give to us the kind of information which is available in other countries which have joined with us in the great work of preserving freedom for mankind.

Hon. Brooke Claxton (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Chairman, I am sure that hon. members will agree with a great part of what the leader of the opposition has said. If I may say so, he is going over familiar ground, because much of this has been said before in this house by himself and others, and by other leaders of the democratic countries. He has put fairly and squarely before the committee the great desirability of the North Atlantic treaty nations having the greatest possible

forces in being with which to deter aggression, or, should an emergency arise and aggression take place, to defend themselves and defeat the aggressor. With that objective everyone in this house, and I am sure everyone in the country and all the people of the north Atlantic countries, are in agreement.

The defence ministries of the twelve countries are doing what they can with the resources put at their disposal to secure that result and to make as great progress as they can. But this is by no means an easy task. It is one which cannot be accomplished by means other than the resources which are made available out of the national production of each country and voted by parliament. In our case, as I have said, we are seeking \$425 million for defence in the year 1950-51. I do not suggest that this sum will provide us with as much in the way of forces in being as we should like to have.

The question, as I have suggested on every occasion when these estimates have come up, is whether or not the money appropriated is being spent in the right way as between the navy, army, air force, and defence research, and whether or not it is being spent in the right proportions as between personnel, equipment and property. That is the problem of defence planning, and it is by no means an easy problem, here or anywhere else.

I appreciate the generous references made by the leader of the opposition to the officers and men of the armed forces. As he said, we have reason to be proud of them and to be impressed by their skill and the evidence of training and high level of discipline. I have probably seen more of our armed forces than anyone else in this country since the war, and I must say it has been impressive to see the progress that has been made in all directions since 1946.

The leader of the opposition asks whether that progress is being made along sound lines. I can only express my opinion based on information and advice I have, not only from the chiefs of staff and other advisers of the government, but also from my discussions with my opposite numbers in other countries, and with many of their chiefs of staff. It is my opinion that, given our geographical position, our role in defence and the resources put at our disposal, we are spending the money on sound lines.

If I may go over old ground again for a minute or two, I should like to refer to what the positions and roles of the services are. Taking the navy first, its role is obviously antisubmarine work—the protection of our coasts and shipping against submarines and mines. We have as large a number of vessels in commission as we can operate with the