

Supply—National Defence

This is important, so long as it does not disclose a security measure, and I should like to know just how well equipped they are. How far does their equipment go? Is it only for detection, or are they able to counteract the missile once it has left the submarine?

I may say, Mr. Chairman, that I am very proud and grateful for this type of development in our naval service. In view of the minister's statement, and in view of the hundreds of millions of dollars that were spent, I should like to know whether or not we might be able to save a few hundred million on other aspects of defence which I think are useless, and add to the naval service which I think can make a real contribution to this country, to North America and NATO.

Mr. Pearkes: I remember the episode to which the hon. gentleman referred when certain shells were fired near Estevan point on the west coast of Vancouver island. This episode is rather vivid in my memory. As a result of that, we are doing all we can to protect the shores of this country, both the Atlantic and the Pacific, from similar attacks. The submarine menace has increased considerably since world war II. The hon. member is quite correct when he says there are some submarines which can, at the present time, fire missiles from their decks. We may expect further development along those lines in the next few years.

As I said yesterday, and I regret that I have to repeat it, because I think it is important, at the present time there is no defence against the missile once it has been launched, whether it be launched from a submarine or from a land pad. We are, therefore, increasing the ability of our naval escorts to hunt out and destroy hostile submarines as far away from our coasts as possible. That may mean hundreds of miles from our coasts. It means that we have to have large ships, larger than the old destroyers of a few years ago. They have to be seaworthy and they have to be able to remain on patrol for days at a time. This is one reason why we are spending the money to get a tanker this year, so as to enable our ships to remain on patrol longer and replenish them while they are there.

The hon. gentleman asked about the equipment. Well, I cannot and should not give details regarding the range or even the number of weapons our ships are carrying. Let me say this without any qualifications at all, that I believe our ships are equipped with the very best type of sonar detection devices that are procurable in any country in the world. I feel it is rather significant that the Royal Navy, in the last few months, has made arrangements to buy from Canada some of the sonar equipment we have developed.

[Mr. Winch.]

These are the means of detection by surface vessels. They are supplemented by similar equipment which is carried on the Argus marine aircraft on the Atlantic coast and the Neptune marine reconnaissance aircraft on the Pacific coast. All our ships are armed with the 43 torpedo, and torpedoes now have a homing warhead and are far more effective than they were at the time of the second world war.

In addition these ships carry batteries either of the Squid or Limbo mortar, which are able to fire mortars and depth charges in a pattern so they may destroy the submarine once it has been found. The problem is to keep our ships afloat as long as possible, and to prevent hostile submarines from coming within range of our shore targets. We have to strike a reasonable balance between the requirements of the navy, the army and the air force. This year roughly 18 per cent of the total expenditure is for the naval service.

Mr. Winch: May I follow that up? I am no expert on these matters but I believe the minister, in his last statement, has brought out the important phase of this problem. He gave the figures for the percentage spent on the navy, the percentage spent on the army and the percentage spent on the air force. In my opinion, Mr. Chairman, there is the absolute key as to why we have not a defence policy. It is not a matter of what percentage has been spent for the navy, what percentage has been spent for the air force or the army. For what is the money being spent, not in so far as each of the three services is concerned but in so far as a national defence policy is concerned?

I believe the minister said 18 per cent was being spent on the navy. The fact that 18 per cent is being spent on the navy does not mean a confounded thing. What does mean everything is, what is our defence policy? What is the part the navy plays in it?

Speaking for myself, quite bluntly, I believe that you could save a good deal of money which I think is being wasted now in many expenditures and could perhaps do more on the navy front in the type of ship protection or anti-submarine protection. It is not a matter of percentage; it is a matter of protection. I should like to add this. I have asked the question and I received the answer no. I want to say that in my estimation you could save a great deal of money on many of the expenditures under your defence estimates and could perhaps spend it to a good deal more advantage under this vote for the Royal Canadian Navy on the type of work known as anti-submarine protection, than it is being spent at the present moment.