

By this time an aroused public, obviously made of more responsible stuff than the Liberal government of the day, forced an about-face attitude toward participation. The country was, as might have been expected, militarily unprepared. But, thanks to the extra time provided by the somewhat "on again, off again" philosophy early in World War I, our national embarrassment with respect to preparedness was reduced to some extent. Canada was again portrayed as a clearly autonomous and responsible entity in the eyes of the world.

In 1950, albeit forced by an alerted opposition and an aroused public over readiness to meet the Korean difficulty, the then prime minister, Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent, took action that appeared to break tradition with Liberal attitudes toward defence. Instead of the standard pattern of isolationist, inward-looking policies of the past, defence forces were built up toward a more responsible status. Defence watchers were encouraged to proclaim that Canada at last appreciated that defence was integral to political and economic factors in the world at large. Not everyone was convinced, and the contrary viewpoint was perhaps best expressed by Mr. Frank Underhill in 1953 when he wrote:

... the most modest quota of armed forces to Korea and western Europe shows only a reluctant, half-isolationist acceptance of new, unpleasant international duties—maybe we should not flatter ourselves that the 1950s are so far in advance of the 1920s.

Mr. Speaker, if there is any validity whatever with respect to Mr. Underhill's criticism of Canada's defence posture in the 1950s, I suggest it must represent an undeniable truth in relation to the 1970s. This leads me back to my concern about the Prime Minister's attitude toward defence. Not only does he demonstrate the traditional Liberal-prime minister lack of appreciation of the relationship of international and defence responsibilities, but it seems he is prepared deliberately to deceive the Canadian public as to what our defence capability really is. It is one thing to quite openly adopt an isolationist stance and face the public's conclusion; it is quite another matter to pretend to have an order of defence capability that in reality does not exist.

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From the outset the Prime Minister has demonstrated to Canadians his desire to retreat from world involvement. Suggestions of isolationism have surrounded many of his moves since 1967. With respect to the forces, he has questioned their necessity. He has confronted our neighbours to the south on numerous occasions. He masterminded the unilateral withdrawal of half of our forces from NATO at a delicate point in MBFR talks and would have brought them all home except for pressures both from within NATO and from Canadians here at home. Conceding only the importance of international trade, every other posture has been toward neutrality, away from the traditions and patterns of our external alliances and toward external postures which reflect only our own self-interests. They have been away from the recognition that we are deeply involved in a world that does not as yet know peace nor is able to discern it for the immediate years ahead.

We have been cautioned by our senior military field commanders that the forces can no longer meet the roles and tasks as presently laid down for them with fewer men

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than they now have. Indeed, it is interesting to note we have now eroded about 40 per cent of our first priority, that of the defence of Canada, so that we might support our fourth priority, that of maintenance and supervision in the Middle East. Indeed, most of them will privately admit that they are hard pressed to even meet these roles with their present strength levels. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that in this regard it is reassuring to have our senior men speaking out.

I have always believed that it was not alone the responsibility of cabinet to maintain civil control over the military but, rather, the responsibility of an informed electorate as well. We will only be fully informed when our senior professional military leaders are able to speak out. I think it is healthy to have an informed electorate, and if this is the only way then let us have more of it from time to time. I trust the high degree of professionalism and belief in our country that is deposited in our general ranking officers. The present minister does not strike many Canadians as being one who is prepared to fight the battles of his professional force within cabinet or with the Prime Minister. He is a good man but he is not known for his strength in cabinet. Therefore, what else can one conclude but that it is the PMO calling the shots?

We do not have enough funds adequately to meet our first priority, let alone the other three. We have not renewed our equipment. We have not renewed our armaments nor their delivery long-range systems. We have shelved long-range maritime patrol replacement. We have seen plans to replace our track-tank. We have not gone into the many areas where equipment renewals are not only necessary but important if we are to maintain the confidence of our allies both within the United Nations and here on the North American continent.

I cannot help feeling that the present position of the Canadian armed forces is as a direct result of application of the personal philosophy of the Prime Minister. If he has sought out the best senior professional military advice and the highest level of external affairs advice available, and on the basis of that advice has concluded that Canada does not require a national armed force, let us have some national dialogue and debate. He may be right, but I say he is not—and he will not be right if he has taken this position in isolation. He is not acting responsibly on behalf of Canada by putting our forces in a position where they are no longer an adequate military force but a paramilitary force with the role of protecting the north or the mid-Canada line. I say the Prime Minister is wrong. The position he has adopted is a disservice to Canada and our allies to the south. It is an enormous disservice to our trading partners around the world.

I suggest he has let down the United Nations with regard to Canada's traditional undertaking to support those actions which require the presence of a neutral military force. I reiterate that Canadians will not find the answer to concerns about Canada's defence forces in numbers, but in the deliberate denial by the Prime Minister's office alone, bypassing the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Richardson) and not providing the funds required and asked for by the senior professional military force in order to maintain an adequate force capable of meeting the priorities which this government has given to it. The