

GOVERNMENT



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WEEK'S EVENTS IN REVIEW

NORTH AMERICAN DEFENCE: "I do not believe we are going to have a war in the near future, but equally I do not see any sign of a change in the long-term objectives of the Soviet Union," said the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Brooke Claxton, as the first point in his summary of an address in the House of Commons on May 20, introducing his departmental estimates.

The summary with which the Minister concluded his speech proceeded as follows:

"Secondly, the planned build-up of strength of the free nations has been a major factor in preserving peace, and consequently it is only common sense that we should continue that effort for precisely the same reasons that five years ago led us to agree in common on this policy and plan.

"Thirdly, we are nearing the end of the development of large classes of weapons. It is very hard today to build a gun better than the 25 pounder, or the 155 millimeter. The cost of any improvement in range or operational qualities is out of all proportion to the advantage gained in performance, and that is true of a very large range of weapons. We are entering into the era at last where there are already in operation guided missiles from ground to air and air to air, and their accuracy and efficiency will be increased.

"We may also be coming close to the time when the pilot of a fighter aircraft will not have much more to do than get the aircraft off and back on to the ground, so that by the time

we have our supersonic fighters to replace the F-86E and the CF-100 it is at least possible that these will be the last aircraft to depend extensively on human beings, and we will then be in or very close to the age of the push-button. It has been a long time coming and it is still some distance off.

"But we will never eliminate the human factor that brings me to this point, that while the allies have made great advances, everything we know points to the fact that the Russians also have made great advances and we have no reason to believe that we can continue to be superior in science, research, engineering and production unless we continue to make even larger efforts in the field of research, development and production.

"As we get into - to use a curious term - the very sophisticated types of weapons and aircraft, the cost increase is out of all proportion so that we must, while maintaining this effort, strive steadily for simplification, economy, efficiency, and standardization. When you get into the field of bombers, fighters, guided missiles, radar, anti-aircraft devices and the like your equipment is no good if the enemy has something which is even slightly better. Consequently, as I say, we must keep up the effort in research, development, engineering, and production, and strive steadily for economy.

"Fourth, we will certainly see a build-up in continental defence as the importance of this increases with the necessity of protect-