

North Atlantic Treaty

in this house in the remarks that I made. The Prime Minister has given the interpretation placed on the interview by the Minister of National Defence. I must say it is difficult to grasp the explanation made by the Minister of National Defence that the Canadian Press report went beyond what he said. In the first place, the Canadian Press dispatch was one which carried the name of one of the most famous Canadian war reporters, who since the war has been dealing particularly with military matters. I believe that every hon. member of this house will approve of my statement that Mr. Douglas How is one of the most highly regarded members of the press gallery. He gave us a detailed account starting with the words:

Defence Minister Claxton said this morning in Rotterdam that Canada will foot the bill for the construction of four or five aerodromes in Europe.

Then, after explaining the fact that this statement was made at the time the Canadian 27th infantry brigade was being turned over to General Eisenhower, the report goes on:

The aerodromes, he said, will cost \$100 million.

I would be very reluctant to believe that Mr. Douglas How would make a statement of that kind unless it had been made, but the thing that makes it difficult to accept the explanation of the minister in this respect is that a similar statement was carried by the British United Press. It is a strange coincidence that they believed also the statement had been made in regard to Canada paying the building costs. Furthermore, a similar dispatch was carried by the United Press in the United States, and by Associated Press in the United States and throughout the world.

I believe it may indicate how difficult it is to understand any suggestion that there was an extension of the minister's remarks when I read this paragraph from an Associated Press dispatch from Rotterdam, dated November 21, which appeared in the New York *Herald Tribune* on November 22:

Canadian defence minister Brooke Claxton said here today that Canada will build four or five new airstrips in western Europe to field an eleven squadron jet air division. He estimated the cost at \$100 million.

It would indeed be a remarkable thing if at that press conference the representatives of several of the best known press agencies, for some reason, all introduced statements which had not actually been made by the minister. I would point out that in his remarks the Prime Minister has not referred to another statement, which was not made at Rotterdam but was made the day before, and which goes to this whole question as to whether or not statements of policy and commitments are being made outside of this

parliament without parliament previously knowing about them. An earlier dispatch from The Hague dated November 20, and also signed by Mr. Douglas How of Canadian Press, contains a brief statement in regard to the arrival there of the Canadian contingent. Then it refers to the construction of barracks in Germany, and it deals very definitely with where they are to be and what is to be done. It reads in part as follows:

Defence Minister Claxton announced last night that Canada is planning to erect permanent quarters for her 27th brigade in the Soest area of western Germany—a move which would put a garrison in that key area for any allied defence stand east of the Rhine.

Then further in that same dispatch I quote these words:

. . . the minister said the barracks will be built by Germans, the work to start in the next few months and be completed late next year.

Further on in the same dispatch I quote these words:

It is expected to cost between \$5 million and \$10 million.

That was a very definite statement of policy and commitment which has not been covered by the remarks of the Prime Minister, and which cannot be covered by any reference to the general statement of the Minister of National Defence of October 22, when he simply made a broad statement that aerodromes were not now available in Europe and in the meantime the squadrons were to be based in Britain, or any general reference to the fact that Canadian troops would be sent to Europe and trained there. Those are definite and positive statements which have appeared not only in Canada but in Europe and the United States.

I believe that this is a matter of considerable importance to all of us, having regard to the position in which we find ourselves in these difficult days. We should certainly be giving every assurance we can to our associates as to what we are doing. We certainly should be giving every assurance that we can as to our full participation in the joint effort for the preservation of peace and the defence of our western civilization. No word that I have used in reference to these dispatches can in any way be taken as a suggestion that I am objecting to Canada's accepting such responsibility as has been approved by this house and by the parliament of Canada. What I am pointing out is that statements of the Minister of National Defence at this particular time have more weight and are of greater importance than those of any other minister, when they are taken in relationship to the place where they were made and to the circumstances under which they were made.