

Air Defence Modernization

Mr. Hopkins: I am hearing some comments from Members across the way regarding my remarks. However, we are discussing today a \$7-billion program. Surely a seven-page announcement deserves more than one-hour's notice since every Member of the House is responsible to the people of Canada.

As I mentioned, this agreement will be signed after only one short meeting of a House committee at which there was no opportunity to call witnesses. Moreover, the Minister of National Defence and the Secretary of State for External Affairs refused to attend meetings this week. We in this Party, like Canadians from coast to coast, are concerned that this modernization will lead directly or indirectly to an involvement in the star wars initiative that has been mentioned on many occasions.

In the past, Canadians bought a limited defence package, which later turned out to be a monster containing the Bomarc missiles. That was done by a previous Conservative Government. Canada should not be put in such a position again. This Parliament and Canadians should not be forced to accept and endorse a secret agreement which could alter our lives forever.

In particular, I would like to point out that the Minister of National Defence mentioned surveillance of the North and our CF-18 fighter aircraft. As everyone in the House knows and as all Canadians know, these aircraft were purchased by the former Liberal government. That agreement was signed. Contrary to all statements in the press about cost overruns, it has now been found that the aircraft may well come in under cost.

There are some serious questions brought up by the Minister's statement. Have the aboriginal people been consulted on this agreement? What has been their involvement? Will they be consulted? Does this agreement contain a specific clause to protect Canada from becoming automatically involved in further advanced technology down the road without proper consultation and without a decision being made by a future Canadian Government? Can we knock out a Cruise missile with a CF-18 Sidewinder or a Sparrow missile? If we cannot do so, will we require nuclear warheads to do so? If we did so, would we be breaching the Anti Ballistic Missile treaty? This would place Canada in the position of playing a leading role in destabilization.

● (1520)

Will the Minister, even at this eleventh hour, agree to hold immediately an emergency meeting of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence to review in detail the proposed agreement with the aid of outside, independent experts? If he will not agree to an emergency meeting of the committee, will he agree to the immediate postponement of the signing of the accord until Canadians, including the Canadians in Parliament, have had an opportunity to review in detail the agreement before the appropriate parliamentary committee? Surely, that is not asking too much. We have heard a lot about open Government in Canada—

Mr. Malone: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hopkins: The Hon. Member can clap, but we have a \$7 billion secret agreement which is being signed without consultation with the Parliament of Canada. That is open Government!

Will the Minister assure the House that there is a clause in the proposed agreement which will guarantee that in no way will the modernized system be used to support or complement the Strategic Defence Initiative? Canadians want a 100 per cent guarantee that there will be no linkage between the agreement and SDI. Will the Minister guarantee to the House that there will be a clause in the agreement which will ensure an automatic review of the agreement—it is very important and we had this with NORAD—at least every five years by the Parliament of Canada and that, if so desired, Parliament may revise any part of that agreement on one year's notice? That is not asking too much when we are talking about Canadian sovereignty.

There is one other item which I would like to mention, that is, the Cadin-Pine Tree stations which will be closed. I note in the agreement that the Government has given a commitment that it will liaison very closely with communities which are built around the Cadin-Pine Tree Line. We welcome that. We will watch carefully to make certain that that commitment to those small communities in Canada is entirely lived up to.

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Nielsen) for bringing back the old tradition in the House of ministerial statements on motions, to give members of the Opposition a chance to comment on major policy statements. However, I hope that the Minister will not limit his involvement with this side of the House simply to a seven-page document. I hope we can call on him at any time that is reasonable and feasible to come to a committee hearing so that we can spend several hours discussing this very, very vital and important policy.

The Government has stated that it is necessary to upgrade the old Dew Line because it is outdated. The Senate committee pointed out that gaps in radar could allow Soviet bombers to attack North America. Therefore, the Government believes that it must counter that threat to protect our sovereignty. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) said that the previous Liberal Government had compromised that sovereignty by neglecting Canada's defences. He is only partly right. The Liberals did neglect our defences, there is no doubt about that. They are responsible for the threat which we must counter with a new North Warning System, but not for the reasons which the Prime Minister mentioned earlier.

The reason the Dew Line has to be updated is the new threat of Soviet bombers armed with Cruise missiles. Canada helped to usher in the era of the Cruise missile. The Government's Defence Industry Productivity Program gave Litton Systems the money to develop the guidance system for the Cruise missile. The defence production sharing agreement allowed that technology to be exported to the United States to build the Cruise missile. The umbrella testing agreement allowed the Cruise missile to be tested and perfected in Canada. Of course, now it has come back to haunt us.