

Civil Defence Responsibilities

reference was made on a number of occasions by myself, will co-ordinate the work of other agencies in the field of civil defence measures and planning as it already does in respect of other civilian measures to prepare for war. Federal responsibilities not allocated to other departments or services will be assumed by this organization, although in general the intention is that this will remain a small, central unit and any substantial operating responsibilities will be assigned to others. Liaison with provincial governments on particular functions will be the responsibility of those dealing with such functions, but the emergency measures organization will be charged with general responsibility for contact with the provincial authorities.

I shall be writing to provincial premiers to set forth the federal proposals in more detail, and I shall then table a copy of these letters. It is the intention to arrange discussions with provincial ministers on the general subject of civil defence before we proceed to implement the foregoing proposals. I should like to take this opportunity to emphasize that this government believes that civil measures to prepare for the possibility of nuclear war must be taken as seriously as are military measures. Civil defence can serve a deterrent purpose by demonstrating to a potential aggressor that Canada is determined to survive even a nuclear war and carry on as an organized society and united nation in the face of the utmost perils and hardships.

Hon. Paul Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, the statement the Prime Minister has given the house has been asked for on a number of occasions during this session of parliament by various members sitting in the opposition. We have not had a statement on civil defence since the Minister of National Health and Welfare made a short statement when he introduced his main estimates in the last session of parliament. As a result a long interval has elapsed since this government seized the opportunity to make a statement on this very important and difficult matter. It is no wonder that municipalities, notably the metropolitan area of Toronto, the city of Ottawa and other communities, have complained about the lack of a statement of policy by the government of Canada.

While we welcome the statement the Prime Minister has just given the house, I am sure the municipalities and the provincial governments will find the statement does not reveal the kind of detail for which they have been asking from the Minister of National Health and Welfare, who up to today has had the very difficult responsibility of administrating

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

civil defence in Canada of course in co-operation with the provinces and the municipalities.

The situation the Prime Minister has outlined apparently does not take into account developments, notably in the United States, which were announced yesterday at Battle Creek in the matter of co-ordinating of civil defence in the United States. Emphasis is given in that country, in the face of the growing exigencies of the moment, to private and public shelters. We can only hope that with the assignment of some of the functions to the office of the privy council and to the armed forces, this will mean, as a result of the transfer of some functions to the Minister of National Defence, that we might expect a clarification from the government with regard to the emphasis now given to shelters in the United States.

By the announcement now made the army is to be given certain functions which it is said have heretofore not been assigned to the armed forces. I am sure the Prime Minister would not want to convey the impression that the armed forces have not, under the Minister of National Health and Welfare and pursuant to the authority of the militia act, carried out functions in the matter of civil defence. In this connection we were guided in this country during the last few years by the experience in Britain where, under their arrangements, mobile army units were provided with authority to assist the civil defence authorities in the prosecution of their assignments. We are now told that such matters as warning of attack, matters having to do with radioactive fall-out, the right of re-entry into damaged areas, are to be pursued by the armed forces.

Nothing is said, of course, in the statement made by the Prime Minister of the amendment made yesterday by Senator Anderson in the United States with regard to the error of the AEC in the matter of strontium 90 and the extent to which it lingers in the air, an amendment which could have the most serious consequences for mankind if that error were to take on additional forms. It is noteworthy, however, that in the statement made yesterday by Senator Anderson, commenting with regard to the conclusions of the AEC, it was not thought that as a result of the quicker dispatch to the ground of strontium 90 there would be any appreciable increase in the danger to human health. I presume nevertheless that the statement made a few weeks ago in the house by the Minister of National Health and Welfare still stands.

Nothing has been said by the Prime Minister that would indicate that there has been