

Statement by Minister on Defence Needs

a report on this subject prior to the negotiations in Washington and Brussels. The government had the report for weeks, both the majority report and a minority report signed by three representatives of this party. So that first statement about waiting for a report on NATO is sheer, unmitigated nonsense.

An hon. Member: He did not say that.

Mr. Winch: He did not say it? "In this regard we are looking forward to receiving and studying the report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence." This is the same paragraph on NATO—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Winch: Perhaps the secretary sent me the wrong copy. I completely agree with the minister—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Winch:—when he talks about a reduction in the number of Armed Forces personnel. I had the privilege of attending the Mobile Command exercises at Camp Petawawa last Saturday and the success of the demonstration there, showing what can be done through co-ordination and co-operation, indicates to me that we can vastly reduce our force under NATO in Europe with the efficient integration of army and air force units. And, as the previous speaker suggested, if we did a job at N.D.H.Q. to ensure there were more Indians and less chiefs it would undoubtedly be possible to achieve the objective of 85,000.

However, there is one thing which really bothers us, especially in the Defence Committee, and that is the practice of the government in presenting defence policy as a *fait accompli*. Under its terms of reference the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence was asked to go into all aspects of defence policy, including the subject of Maritime Command. Only last week a subcommittee of nine was established to consider policy governing Maritime Command. It held its organization meeting on Thursday intending to get its work under way, yet today the minister tells us that Maritime Command will continue its anti-submarine role. This is another example of a *fait accompli*.

We are told that consideration is being given to replacing the Argus. What about the

[Mr. Winch.]

Tracker which is to be phased out in 1972 or 1973? The statement talks about Canada's sovereign interest in the Arctic. It is really not fair to give us these generalities. The information we have is that our entire navy, including our new ships, has not been constructed with prows suitable for sailing in Arctic waters, and that we do not possess planes capable of operating in that region either. We are entitled to more than generalities of this sort, Mr. Speaker.

I should like to comment on the important aspect of policy which involves A.B.M.s and AWACS. I hope Canada will not enter into any negotiations leading to the establishment here of either the A.B.M. or AWAC systems, but I shall refrain from further comment bearing in mind that there is considerable comment on this matter in the report which is coming from the defence committee.

Nevertheless, I should like to add a further word about the aspect which really stumps members of the House of Commons and its committees. I refer to the government's propensity for the *fait accompli*. Why does the government not take its own committees into consideration before these decisions are made? Why does it not take into consideration the recommendations of other organizations before announcements are made? I have referred particularly to Maritime Command. Now there is the question of a reserve force. I am glad we were given a copy of the minister's statement. Let us see what it says on this aspect: "Along with reductions in the regular force, we are planning to reduce the reserve force. In this regard we will be consulting next month with the Conference of Defence Associations."

One month after we have been told by the minister that it has been decided to reduce the reserve force, consultations are to take place with the organizations which are interested. Mr. Speaker, representatives of these associations appeared before the defence committee last week and urged that there should be an increase in the reserve force.

I see, Mr. Speaker, that you are getting restless. I have only a few words to say to end what could have been a lengthy speech—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Winch: We do most heartfully wish that there were more facts presented, less