

THE DEFENCE OF CANADA

*From a statement by the Honourable Brooke Claxton,
Minister of National Defence, in the House of Com-
mons, Ottawa. June 24, 1948.*

The prime purpose of the external policy of a nation which is not aggressive is to ensure the preservation of our peace and our freedom by peaceful measures and thus make the use of defence forces unnecessary.

It follows that as external prospects darken, defence forces have to be increased. They have to be increased in order to make it clear that if war breaks out, our side will win.

The close relationship between external affairs and defence is exemplified by the Secretary of State for External Affairs being a member of the Cabinet Defence Committee. The Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs attends Cabinet Defence Committee and Chiefs of Staff Committee meetings. There is also a close working relationship between External Affairs and the intelligence and planning agencies of the armed forces.

CANADA'S POSITION

For a power of middle rank, situated as Canada is, there is no possibility of Canada fighting alone. Today there is only one possible aggressor; the only war in which Canada would take part would be a world war, a total war. If Canada is attacked, it will be as an incident of a world war, a total war.

Canada's defence policy is based on the assumption that our armed forces will be used only in association with those of friendly great powers. Hence our close working arrangements with the United Kingdom and our joint defence agreement with the United States. Hence our declared willingness to

join in creating a new collective security league under article 51 of the Charter composed of states of western Europe and of the north Atlantic.

The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs have stated our position in as clear terms as it can be stated. That position is generally accepted by the people of all parts of Canada; we are united in support of our country's foreign policy because it is based on a realistic recognition of what are our major national interests.

Every Canadian wants to do everything that is necessary to defend his own country; that is, every Canadian who is not a communist. There are, as you know, a great many ways to defend Canada against communism, and none of them must be neglected.

This is a difficult subject to deal with at any time, but never more so than today. There never has been a period in history when the time factor has been so important, or so difficult. We are in a period of change and development, but no one can yet say with accuracy when a given development will occur or exactly what its consequences will be. We must be ready to cast aside out-of-date ideas and plans, just as much as out-of-date weapons. For these reasons I wish to assure the Committee that we are constantly considering future possibilities. Twice a year the chiefs of staff present a joint appreciation and plan to the Cabinet Defence Committee. Their planning teams are at work all the year round. Possibilities, probabilities and plans are under

review on the assumption that war might take place at dates ranging from the present time on into the indefinite future.

New weapons such as guided missiles, atomic bombs, jet-propelled aircraft and high-speed submarines, have naturally excited speculation. The "push-button war" has become so widely accepted as a phrase that many people have come to think as a fact, that its day is already here.

NO PUSH-BUTTON WAR

The view of every responsible and reputable scientist and soldier I know of is that the day of push-button warfare has not yet come.

A second and similar point is that our own exercises and experience confirm the view held, I believe, by most authorities, that in the immediate future any attack on North America would be diversionary, designed to panic the people of this continent into putting a disproportionate amount of effort into passive local defence.

A third point is that a potential aggressor, if it had atomic weapons at all, would use them on targets of the greatest strategical importance, and it is very unlikely that in the near future such an aggressor would use any such weapons he had on many targets in Canada. In this short-term period Canada is almost certainly going to be neither the Belgium nor the Bikini of the next war.

What must be realized, if we are to play our role sensibly is that there is neither an easy nor sudden solution to the problem of our national defence. There is no easy guarantee of security; it can-