

then we ought to abandon the alliance. That, of course, means abandoning a great deal of any prospect that we have of sovereignty or independence in respect of other people who are on our side. If we do not pull our weight in NATO, and do not do our part with respect to conventional warfare, somebody else is going to have to do it for us. We might not approve of their doing it for us, but they are going to do it for us. If that happens, then I think our capacity to weigh in on the decisions in that field is somewhat limited.

While I do not pretend to speak on behalf of the committee or present an exhaustive analysis of the situation—I realize that this is hardly the time to do so in any case—

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): It's fine.

Senator Roblin: Well, if you don't have your bills at 3.30, you're out of luck.

When this matter was brought up at this stage, I gave my view as to what the committee was attempting to do. We should deal with this question of nuclear warfare as opposed to conventional warfare. We should deal with the question of our place in the alliance and what it means for Canadian sovereignty and independence and influence in the decision-making, and we should deal with the question of whether a deterrent in the event of conventional warfare is worth anything at all.

Those three propositions are wide open to debate. It is taxing some of the best minds in the western world to come up with the right answers. Perhaps the committee does not have the right answers. I am willing to make plenty of room for differences of opinion or to be convinced, indeed, that the general approach of the committee to these problems is open to question. I have to admit that, but as far as I am concerned the work of the committee had those three considerations in mind, and that should be taken into account in judging what the committee is recommending.

This whole question requires a wiser man than me to come up with the correct answer, but I think the committee has made an honest—and I know everyone agrees with this—and legitimate attempt to define the problem. That is the first thing to do—define the issue—and then consider how Canada should react to it. For what they are worth, I throw in these few thoughts this afternoon.

Hon. Paul C. Lafond: Honourable senators, I am grateful to those who participated in this debate this afternoon. It is a question that we have to keep at the forefront of our minds. What we also have to keep at the forefront of our thinking is alerting the population of Canada to our requirements and basic needs on defence. I completely agree with Senator Roblin's comments, particularly with respect to the political impact or the nature of the influence we may exert with our allies, if we are not true to ourselves or them in honouring the defence commitments that we have accepted.

I cannot completely disagree with Senator Gigantès, but he seems to concentrate on one scenario only—that of nuclear war or no war. I do not think it is as black or white as that. If

we were to accept that the only scenario is nuclear war on both sides of the fence, then let us drop our defences completely. If we do that, then, of course, we avoid nuclear war because the other side does not need to use nuclear weapons to pursue their aims.

Aside from our commitments to the Alliance, global conflicts and so on, we have to take care to police our own backyard. We need some defences along our coast. We need to defend ourselves against minor encroachments. Such minor encroachments, as we say in our report, can from time to time come from our enemies as they can come from our friends.

● (1520)

It is a question of Canada having at hand a navy to defend its coast, its territories and its approaches. While this subject may not have been pinpointed in our report, a major item to my mind is our deploring the total absence of mine counter-measures in the make-up of our navy at the present time. We know that the potential enemy has a tremendous inventory of mines of a wide variety. The latest figures we were given were in the order of 350,000 to 400,000. We know that the enemy has the capacity to deploy those mines *ad infinitum* by a variety of ways through submarines, fishing vessels and aircraft. We know it takes very few of those mines to create panic in North America.

It would only take two dozen mines across the Juan de Fuca Strait; six across the front of Halifax harbour; twelve across the Cabot Strait; the Belle Isle Strait we probably cannot ignore;—

Senator Roblin: One would do there.

Senator Lafond:—two or three in front of Sydney Harbour; half a dozen in front of St. John's Harbour; and a dozen across the Bay of Fundy—which could be done in 20 hours—to completely block our sea lanes and our workable harbours. No matter what else we need do, we need to ship materials, men and food abroad should the conflict develop. Yet, our harbours can be completely blocked within a matter of hours.

As we say in our report, at the moment our only means of hunting, discovering and destroying mines is by hand-held equipment used by some of our naval divers. That, to my mind, comes awfully close to criminal negligence.

On that item alone, I still believe the report was of value to the people of Canada. I hope that starting next week, whichever government is to be responsible for our destinies over the next four years, it will pay close attention to the considerations which we ourselves have given to this question.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Gigantès: Honourable senators, I feel somewhat embarrassed in disagreeing with such distinguished honourable senators, such kind people who have shown me great friendliness and patience in allowing me to attend meetings of the National Defence Committee of which I was not a member. However, I do wish to pose some questions to Senators Lafond and Roblin on this subject. At this time, the potential enemy, the Soviet Bloc, does have considerable superiority over us in