

*Abandonment of Defence Projects*

defence against which poses a difficult problem. Such submarines are no longer a weapon to be used against shipping alone; they pose a threat against land bases and against our cities, both on the coast and several hundreds of miles inland, depending on how close such submarines may get. Thus there is a great new defence policy required to deal with this extremely difficult problem. There is no defence against these missiles. The only defence possible would be to keep these submarines beyond the range of our coasts. If this is to be done, or attempted, a great new role remains to be filled in antisubmarine work. I would agree with the minister that a thorough examination of this whole problem of defence against submarines is most necessary, but I would most strongly recommend to him that no decision be taken with regard to our present forces in maritime command until the results of such a study become available. I have reason to believe there is a distinct possibility that the maritime command of the R.C.A.F. will be forced to cut its expenditure drastically in the next fiscal year. I would hope that the minister and his colleagues from the maritime provinces and British Columbia would recognize the importance of any decision along this line, and resist any ideas that their colleagues on treasury board might have to cut the expenditures of maritime command back, so that there may be money to spend somewhere else. The role of maritime command in the R.C.A.F. and of the antisubmarine branch of the navy is a most important one and, as I have said already, and I reiterate, I think it is most essential that no drastic action be taken along the lines of changing our ability to cope with the submarine threat until this study is completed.

If I may be more specific and come nearer home, I am naturally very much concerned about the future of the R.C.A.F. base at Summerside in my province. I want to turn now for a few moments from the question of the purely defence aspects of this matter and point out to the minister that the most serious consideration should be given to the economic impact of any drastic cut in existing defence establishments, especially those in areas of relatively small population where there are no other industries to cushion the blow if there is a cut-back in such military establishments.

If the R.C.A.F. station at Summerside were to be cut back this would have a profound effect on the economy not only of that area but of the whole province. Although this is only one R.C.A.F. station, I think I am correct in saying that looked at in the rather tiny background, relatively speaking, of the economy of Prince Edward Island it is perhaps

[Mr. MacLean (Queens).]

the second most important industry of that province. Its removal or drastic cut-back or even slight cut-back would have a very serious effect on the economy of that area. I would hope that the minister would use his best arguments, and I think there are many in favour of maintaining that base, to convince his colleagues that to cut back this station would be a serious mistake not only from a defence point of view, but because it would have a very detrimental effect on the economy of that area and on the employment situation there.

I am generally not very concerned about whether or not we in this parliament make the Secretary of State (Mr. Pickersgill) an honest man, but I should like to remind the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer) that the Secretary of State had this to say, speaking in Summerside on March 26 last:

It is the Liberal policy to see that every able person willing to work will have the opportunity to earn a decent living.

I should like to point out to the minister that if the air force station at Summerside is cut back there will be a great number of people there who will have their means of livelihood removed and it will be a severe dislocation to the economy of the province of Prince Edward Island. I might say that the fact that the Secretary of State made this statement does not necessarily mean it is now a policy that is embraced by the Liberal government.

I said there was confusion as far as defence policy was concerned, and that is not surprising because contradictory statements have been made not only in this house but with greater frequency during the election campaign by members who now sit on the treasury benches. Almost at the same time as the Secretary of State was saying that it is Liberal policy to see that every able person willing to work will have the opportunity to earn a decent living, the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Sharp) at the opposite end of the country made this statement in Vancouver on February 25, 1963:

People who say that we are going to eliminate unemployment simply don't know the country.

I tend to agree with that statement, but at the moment I should like to point out to the minister that the impression was left not only by the Secretary of State but by his colleague, the Solicitor General (Mr. MacNaught), and by everyone else speaking on behalf of his party, that this very important base at Summerside, which is so important to the economy of Prince Edward Island, would not be downgraded or cut back in any way. I am not raising this point at the moment for political advantage or anything of that