

As a result of the thrusts of my colleagues and myself over the past few months in an effort to get the government to deploy elements of the search and rescue capability, we have as yet only convinced the government to station one or two helicopters in Newfoundland on a semi-permanent basis, and other hardware in Gander.

While we are appreciative of the fact that the government listened, we are far from achieving what should be the requirements for protecting our 200-mile zone because the additional deployment announced is evidence of the lack of fundamental military knowledge in defence tactics which can be related to surveillance and patrol.

The extension of a 200-mile zone prompts the realization that Canada will be responsible to provide surveillance over some 600,000 square miles of coastal waters, a massive task that requires an extensive effort in funding and hardware, as well as logistic capability.

● (2210)

The land mass that will be in the forefront to provide the surveillance of foreign vessels in the province of Newfoundland and I am amazed that neither our Minister of National Defence (Mr. Danson) nor his officials realize what is involved. The height of their ignorance—I do not want to use that word, but I have to—is that any line of defence, to use a basic military term, cannot be confined to a small portion of the area to be defended and I ask that those concerned should look at a map of Newfoundland and of Canada and of the Atlantic region to see the phoneyess and lack of appreciation of fundamental basic training that are evident. In this regard I refer to the fact that the Minister of National Defence looked at the matter from a purely phony political standpoint rather than a strategic one, by not including in the deployment of necessary equipment the western sector of the province of Newfoundland. But what is more despicable to me is that I pointed this out to him in a co-operative manner, and in spite of promises made to me, I have been completely ignored, and this is evident, that even though I have been promised a hearing with top officials, it has been denied.

On the west coast of Newfoundland the sector of the province that I represent in this House, there exists a vacated strategic base, which was occupied during World War II by the Strategic Air Command of the American Air Force, which still offers every logistic support for a search and rescue base of operations. It has more than adequate fuel capacity, hangar space, housing accommodation and technical capability, not to mention the fact that it was considered during World War II to be strategically sound enough in the defence of our nation to warrant the expenditure of multi-millions of dollars to support the defence of North America. And yet the Minister of National Defence chose to ignore the economic benefits to station an element of the force in that area, but rather bowed to pressure on a political basis.

What I detest, however, Mr. Speaker, is that I was promised, verbally in discussions with the minister, a hearing to put my case before senior officials of the Department of National

Adjournment Debate

Defence. It is also hard to understand that at this late date the report of the Canadian Coast Guard task force review of the national search and rescue policy revision has not even as yet been tabled for debate, in spite of repeated assurances that it would be submitted to Cabinet six months ago.

I have tried, Mr. Speaker, in my representation over the years to be reasonable, but it is now finally obvious that I am barking in the wind, and I use "barking" advisedly, and regardless of the three minute reply which I am about to receive I can only deplore the attitude of not only the minister but also his Chief of the Defence staff, the great pretender, who in his declarations of national defence is just as phony as his minister, and I can only repeat what I said in a motion to this House, that they should both be dispatched to the nearest basic training centre for a refresher course not only in basic training but also in common courtesy and sincerity in their obligations to the nation which they represent.

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to reply to the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall). I will try to deal with the main points that he raised in his question. I might point out that I am replying tonight on behalf of the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Danson) rather than the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang). Since the question was originally asked by the hon. member on November 15 the Minister of National Defence has been made responsible for all aspects of search and rescue, so my minister is now responsible for answering all questions on search and rescue.

However, it seems to me that the hon. member is confusing search and rescue with surveillance of the 200-mile limit. I respectfully suggest to him that he should make representations to the minister and to departmental officials with regard to the abandoned base at Stephenville and with regard to the surveillance capability which the department, in conjunction with the Department of Fisheries and the Environment, will be establishing for the surveillance of the expanded coastal zone.

I must, however, take exception to the statement that the minister and his officials do not understand what is involved. From personal knowledge and experience I am well aware that they do understand what is involved. They are working actively and seriously to see that the involvement is fully met both by men and equipment from within the armed forces and other departments that will work in conjunction with national defence in search and rescue, and eventually in surveillance work.

It disturbs me to hear the hon. member say that he has been ignored by the minister and departmental officials. I do not understand how that came about and I want to assure him that I will certainly bring that part of his comments to the attention of my minister at the earliest opportunity. I have found the hon. member to be a rather serious and objective member of the opposition and I would hope, in fact I know, this is some oversight for which there has to be a genuine explanation.