

same range of surveillance as the existing radars of the DEW Line. The new long-range radars will differ in that they will incorporate the most modern technology, and they will provide information on the direction, height and speed of aircraft entering their coverage. This information will permit Canadian forces interceptor aircraft operating from northern airstrips to identify and control potential intruders.

The short-range radars in the North Warning System are designed specifically to provide detection of aircraft at low altitude, to close the serious gaps in the present system.

There is no responsible alternative to modernization. Major components of the existing system are technically obsolete and increasingly difficult and expensive to maintain. Most important, the present system is no longer adequate to meet the modern bomber and Cruise missile threat.

It was Canada which initiated discussions with the United States on the need for a joint approach to modernize the air defence warning system, which is continental in scope. The question of modernization has been under review and study between the two countries since 1976. The approach adopted in the agreement is the result of an independent study, jointly funded by Canada and the United States, which was completed in 1979, and is the result of close consultations between the defence authorities of both countries.

The cost of the over-all modernization project will be in the order of \$7 billion. The United States will be bearing some 88 per cent of this cost. The \$1.5 billion estimated cost of the North Warning System component of the over-all program is to be shared, with Canada paying 40 per cent and the United States 60 per cent. The cost of operating and maintaining the North Warning System is to be shared on the same basis. However, Canada will be completely responsible for the actual operation and maintenance of the system in Canada, a major change from the agreement in effect for the DEW line.

● (1510)

Most of the radar stations in southern Canada which are now part of the Cadin-Pine Tree Line will need to be closed. These stations are of little military value now and they are very expensive to maintain and operate.

We recognize the social obligation to those communities which have come to derive much of their livelihood from these old stations. As a result, we have reached an agreement with the United States to share the costs of closing the stations of the obsolete Cadin-Pine Tree line, Canada paying 45 per cent and the United States paying 55 per cent. Assistance, with the social and economic costs borne by these communities as a result of closure, will be taken into account in the cost-sharing arrangements. I will be working very closely with my Cabinet colleagues, with the provinces and, most important, with the communities concerned to help those people affected by the closures.

Throughout the negotiations, the Government has sought to re-invigorate the Canada-United States defence partnership while at the same time enhancing Canadian sovereignty. This agreement on North American air defence modernization is

Air Defence Modernization

tangible evidence of this Government's commitment to strengthen Canadian defence capacity and to ensure Canadian control of its defences.

Let there be no misunderstanding. By this agreement, Canadian sovereignty has been enhanced, including sovereignty over Canadian territory, sovereignty over Canadian defences, sovereignty over Canada's North and sovereignty over our own airspace.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nielsen: As Deputy Prime Minister, as Minister of National Defence and as the Member for Yukon, I am proud to make this announcement to the House and to the country today.

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, we have just been advised by the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Nielsen) of a major agreement concerning Canada's future defence needs. It is an agreement that will possibly change our international stature in the world and is to be signed in Quebec City on March 18, this weekend, with very little consultation with Members of the House of Commons.

It is rather ironic that one week ago today, I posed a question to the Minister of National Defence asking him if he would appear before the External Affairs and National Defence Committee. At that time, he said he would if he were to be invited to do so by the Steering Committee.

The Minister is not even listening to me. That shows the importance he is giving to this statement.

The Minister gave me a commitment that he would attend a meeting this week. He was invited to do so by the Steering Committee, which met at 3.30 one week ago today. Both he and the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) have been present in this House every day this week, yet neither one of them will consent to attend a meeting of the committee. The names of both Ministers came up at the Steering Committee meeting.

I would like to make one thing very clear, Mr. Speaker. We in the Liberal Party agree that the North Warning System must go into effect for surveillance purposes. There is no question in my mind about that at all. However, there is one thing that I wish to point out very succinctly today, and that is, that the Minister of National Defence should send the previous Liberal Defence Minister a thank-you letter for all the homework he did on this agreement in order that the present Minister could announce it today.

I have what I consider to be a very valid question of privilege. I received this seven-page announcement as the bells were calling Members to the House this afternoon. That gave me no opportunity to discuss the matter with my Party colleagues and my Leader. I think that this was a great discourtesy and I feel that the Minister should certainly take that into consideration in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!