

Supply—National Defence

I say that we are in a partnership and that our partners fully appreciate our position, our sovereign rights and the efforts we are making. With the high cost of modern equipment we must weigh most carefully the advantages and requirements that can be expected before embarking upon any new enterprise or project. The criterion must be how essential is the new project or piece of equipment to the over-all defence picture. With changes taking place as rapidly as they are there is no time for hasty decisions. I place reliability of equipment before prestige weapons, and I make no apologies if I have taken some time to reach decisions. To be cautious does not mean that one lacks courage.

Still other critics have suggested different methods of spending the funds which are made available. I hope I will always be receptive to new ideas, but as no two critics in this group seem to be able to agree I can but thank them for their help and say that I prefer to rely upon the informed advice of the chiefs of staff, a group of dedicated men in whom I have great confidence.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, I am sure the committee will have listened with the greatest possible interest to the statement the minister has just made. In expressing my appreciation of that statement I feel I should say at once that I do not believe this statement or indeed the discussion that will follow it is an adequate substitute for the kind of searching examination of our defence policy that could have taken place before a committee to which experts and witnesses could have been summoned, the kind of examination of our defence policy and planning we have not had this session and which I suggest we should have had.

It is difficult if not impossible to think of a more important subject than that which we are discussing this morning so soon after the happy ceremonial military events of yesterday associated with the equally happy occasion of the visit of Her Majesty.

Whatever it may have been in the past, as the minister has indicated in his statement, defence today is survival because war is total destruction. Defence is also to be found not only—or perhaps now not primarily—in arms, but in policy and diplomacy because the only alternative to destruction, which is world war, is peace. Perhaps we should keep clearly in our minds this morning as we begin the discussion of the defence estimates that we are discussing only one form of defence which, as the minister himself pointed out in his statement, is perhaps not even the most important form of defence because, I take it, military defence must now be subsidiary to political defence. It was

possible in earlier times to associate defence with victorious war and political achievement, indeed with international security. That possibility has gone.

While I will not be able to agree with everything the minister has said there are some parts of his statement with which I am certainly in entire agreement. I am sure that every hon. member of the committee will subscribe wholeheartedly to the tribute the minister paid at the beginning of his statement to the Canadian armed forces in whose hands we have entrusted our military defence. It is in good hands, because the armed forces of Canada are efficient, devoted and loyal. I join the minister in paying tribute to the work they are doing.

For a short time I had the honour and privilege, as so many hon. members of this committee have had, of being identified with the armed forces of this country; and although my identification was undistinguished and obscure, unlike that of my hon. friend the minister, nevertheless it will always remain one of my proudest memories.

In participating in this discussion I am going to divide my remarks broadly into the following categories, all of which I may not be able to cover in my first intervention. I want to talk first about certain basic developments that have occurred in defence concepts, planning and strategy and indeed in the nature of war itself in the last few years. Then I want to discuss the nature of the threat which faces us, because it is essential to an understanding of the policies that should be adopted. This was discussed by the minister. I wish then to refer to the methods we appear to be adopting to meet, defeat and remove that threat. Finally I hope to discuss what in my view should be Canadian policy in that effort, which policy I agree, and should say so at the very beginning, cannot be dissociated from the policies of our friends and allies. In these matters there can be no isolation for us, and because there can be no isolation for us there can be no neutralism for us.

I may be critical in my remarks of some aspects of policy. I am going to suggest that there are some phases of United States defence policy which are now reflected in Canadian policy perhaps to a greater extent than before in our history which must in my mind arouse anxiety. If I am critical I hope to be critical in a constructive way. I recognize that we in the opposition have not all the facts and information at our disposal. Because of that fact we have to deal responsibly with defence questions and realize that perhaps there is information at the disposal of the government which we do not