

Supply—National Defence

by the junior chamber of commerce of St. Johns that this site be leased to the city of St. Johns rather than to private interests?

Hon. George H. Hees (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, since I was not in the house yesterday, I shall take the question as notice and answer it tomorrow.

(Text):

SUPPLY

The house in committee of supply, Mr. Sevigny in the chair.

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

214. Departmental administration, \$3,380,550.

Hon. G. R. Pearkes (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Chairman, in asking the committee for approval of the 1959-60 estimates of the Department of National Defence, I welcome the opportunity that is given for a debate on defence matters.

I would like first to pay a sincere tribute to the personnel of our armed forces, both regular and reserve. During the past year I have had occasion to visit a number of service establishments at home and overseas. Many members of this committee have also had this opportunity. I am sure I have the concurrence of all in congratulating the personnel of our armed services on the manner in which they are carrying out the tasks which have been assigned to them. As a result of their efforts and those of our allies we have enjoyed during the past 12 months a period of comparative peace; but even in such times there are many occasions which call for acts of outstanding bravery by members of our armed forces. I am sure the house will be interested to know that Her Majesty the Queen while in Canada is awarding two air force crosses, five George medals and one British Empire medal to individuals of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian army and the Royal Canadian Air Force. Her Majesty is also presenting colours to the Royal Canadian Navy and to certain regiments of the Canadian army. In addition, service personnel both regular and reserve have been honoured by participating in the ceremonies taking place across Canada in connection with Her Majesty's tour.

While I realize that in the time at my disposal I cannot cover all facets of defence, it is appropriate now to make some general remarks on our defence thinking. There are a number of factors that must be considered in introducing these estimates. The requirements deemed necessary for defence today will almost certainly be outmoded a few years from now. This, of course, is not solely a Canadian problem; it is a problem facing

every country today. In our endeavours to solve it we should be ready and willing to consult with our partners in Europe and on the North American continent.

We must also be prepared to take advantage of our collective agreements so we can provide a better and more lasting peace within our economic limitations. By co-operating with our allies we are able to have an integrated, balanced force among all the allies rather than attempting to have a balanced force within each nation. It has been obvious for some time that no country can stand alone or can plan its defence in isolation.

This is particularly true of Canada. Our geographic position and our varied interests require us to take part in collective defence. Therefore when planning a defence program we have to take into account many considerations, such as the changing threat which is brought about principally by rapid developments in the technological field, particularly in the area of offensive weapons introduced into the armament inventory of a potential enemy, and also the very long time required to develop and produce modern defensive weapons systems and the ever increasing costs of research development and production.

A full appreciation of the concept of modern war which might come without warning requires our forces to be trained, equipped and immediately ready for operations. Gone are the days when a protracted period of time might be devoted to mobilization and the conversion of industry from a peace to a war footing. I have discussed the threat on previous occasions, but as all our preparations are linked with the appreciation of the threat it is perhaps worth while emphasizing some of the aspects of this part of our defence problem.

The evaluation of the threat cannot be completely reliable, since development of ways and means of waging war is of necessity one of the most closely guarded secrets of any country. In fact the record shows that there has been a tendency in the past to underestimate the achievements of the Soviet union in this particular field. They have been particularly successful in concealing their intentions. However, the best assessment that we can make of the type and scale of attack against this continent is roughly as follows.

For the present and in the immediate future the principal attack against North America would be by a relatively small number of long range manned bombers carrying megaton weapons. These might well be augmented by a large number of medium bombers on one-way missions carrying nuclear weapons of varying yields. Russia might not care