

Alleged Lack of Government Leadership

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pearson: Hon. gentlemen opposite may laugh. Perhaps they are in favour of nuclear weapons. We are in favour of doing away with nuclear weapons, of doing away with testing, of doing away with all weapons, of doing away with war which is the ultimate immorality. But we are not going to take steps now that will dishonour the pledges we have made until we have a chance to re-examine the basis of defence policy and find a better defence policy for Canada than that which has been in effect in the last five years. That does not mean—of course it does not mean although it is being misinterpreted to mean—that the day after we accepted these weapons we would, if we were in power, repudiate that acceptance and renegotiate ourselves out of that pledge at once. Of course that could not be done. It will take time, it will take effort, and during the time that is required and the effort that is required, because we do these things in co-operation with our friends, we will continue to ensure that the men we have over there will have the weapons to do the job which they are there to do.

There are a great many things that we think can be more effectively done by Canada than some of the things we have been asked to do in the last few years or in the last 10 or 15 years, if you like, because these things go back prior to 1957. But the point is that we have now at this time accepted a certain pledge and we will carry out that pledge until we get a better defence policy for Canada which will make this kind of weapon, I would hope, unnecessary. I am not even going to say now that our renegotiation will be on the basis that we will never be able to use nuclear weapons because by that time we may have a genuine NATO nuclear deterrent under NATO control. So I will not in advance, so far as I have any responsibility and so far as my own views are concerned, contract out of participation in that kind of NATO defence activity.

There is the situation so far as our defence policy is concerned. I am satisfied that we can work this out in collaboration with our friends—our friends in Washington in so far as continental defence is concerned, our friends in NATO in so far as NATO defence is concerned. It does not add anything to the dignity of debate on these matters for the Prime Minister of this country to suggest that any time anybody on this side goes across the border he goes across to get his instructions and come back and make a speech here. That is the kind of cheap insinuation in which the Prime Minister is so expert.

[Mr. Pearson.]

The Prime Minister made great play with the fact that we make our own policies in Canada. Who is doubting that? Who made policy in Canada from 1935 to 1957? If you think that Canada was a satellite of the United States during those years, go down to Washington and ask the people who were in charge then. Go to the United Nations and find out what Canadian policy was at the United Nations and whether we were a satellite of any country.

An hon. Member: Tell us about Suez.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Who made the policy in 1938 when you kept Britain out?

Mr. Pearson: We want to get back to those days when Canada was so respected, because she did make her own policy; when Canada was so respected because she made her own policy in co-operation and friendship with her allies.

(Translation):

Mr. Gilles Gregoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, about a month ago, while the members of this house were at home in their riding during the holiday season recess, an American general, General Norstad, visited Ottawa. He made some statements and the Liberal party got so excited that they find themselves in confusion today.

During the last week or so, we heard very long speeches, four in all by the Liberal party leader and several also by the government head, but in all those speeches, no mention was ever made of the programs required to solve this country's problems. Efforts were made particularly to spread confusion and to cast blame on the other party. I suggest that everything the Liberals said about the Conservative party is true and everything the Conservatives said about the Liberal party is also true. Both parties are right when they criticize each other. It is remarkable that when a party is in the opposition, it always seems better than when in power. But when they are in power, both of them, whether it be the Liberal party during 22 years or the Conservative party today, we find that they are irresolute and confused. The opposition party can always pretend it can do everything. Those gentlemen are so efficient when they sit on this side, they make fine speeches and from what they say one would think they can do anything.

If the Canadian people could only attend the debates of the house, they would realize that the old line parties are better in the opposition than in power. They would then