

the meantime. What we have ended up with is a mishmash of programs, a number of different orientations, and 18 different departments involved in trying to rationalize the management of our toxic control program.

I would like to look first at the premise of the Hon. Member, that these programs are gone. If he wants to give the Estimates the proper attention, he will see that none of those programs has been cancelled. The programs have been integrated into the internal programs of the department. The people who live on the Niagara River can be comforted by the fact that the programs will continue.

What the previous Government had was a fund which was superimposed on the regular Estimates, and the Hon. Member knows it was due to run out this year. It was a three-year program. All of the programs funded by that extra money are now included in the regular programming, with renewed vigour.

One of the Minister's priorities, and he has made sure it is also a priority of the department—I think this is very important in this whole discussion—is that toxic chemicals are probably second on our list of concerns, following acid rain. The competence with which we have handled that program will be matched in the way we handle the toxic chemical program with the thousands of new chemicals coming on stream.

We as a Government need to organize and manage from beginning to end the question of toxic chemicals and the pollution they are causing in our water, our air, the food we eat, indeed, the whole range of things we have to deal with on a day-to-day basis as Canadians. The Government and this Department are now in the process of ensuring that we have a long-term program that will adequately deal with those very serious questions.

● (1810)

NATIONAL DEFENCE—NORTH WARNING SYSTEM—
PARTICIPATION OF NORTHERN CONTRACTORS

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, on May 3 I asked the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Nielsen) what the Government was doing to ensure that northern contractors and employees might benefit from the new North Warning System. I was pleased with the answer he gave at that time. He told us that as soon as the decisions had been made, or shortly thereafter, he had sent officers of his Department to brief the various territorial Governments, and that northern contractors and employees would be given every opportunity for involvement in this project. That was good news. The reason I bring this matter up again this evening is to elaborate a little on the way things went in the past and the way in which they might go better in the future.

In the mid 1950s, when the DEW line was originally constructed, things were very different. We did not have a lot of northern contractors with expertise. The level of training and education of the population was, to a great extent, lower than it is today. The whole construction exercise was very much under the control and management of the United States

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Air Force. Canadians did not play a full role in construction at that time.

There is a story going around that I believe is true. At one time a Supreme Court judge was forced to land at one of the DEW line sites. The American officer commanding there would not let the Canadian Supreme Court judge into the base. He told him to go away. These things will certainly not happen again with the new North Warning System. We have come a very long way in the last 30 years.

I have had a number of inquiries from very competent northern contractors involved in the building and construction trades, in engineering design work, in transportation, and in supply of all kinds of material, who are anxious to get in on the opportunities involved with the North Warning System. I have had inquiries from Chambers of Commerce and Arctic Cooperatives Limited which represent a number of businesses.

I have made a suggestion to the Minister of National Defence which I hope he will act on. I have suggested that he create a liaison office to provide information to northern contractors. This might be located in Ottawa, for the time being. It might eventually be located in Yellowknife, or they may want to use some of the facilities which may be vacated at CFS Inuvik. We should have an office established and an officer in charge whose specific job it is to encourage northern involvement in the scheme. We should be able to provide information to northern contractors. They want to know in advance what types of jobs are going to be available. If that information is provided to them it will allow them to make the necessary arrangements to get their bids in order and find the available people. It may be necessary to engage in a little training of northern employees in order to take advantage of the contracts as they come up.

I have had suggestions from constituents with regard to the integration of civil and military support for the system. Perhaps unit toll carriers can be used instead of completely military aircraft. That might result in a saving to the Department of National Defence, and at the same time increase the volume of freight handled by the unit toll carriers, hopefully bringing down the price. The possibility of establishing staging centres somewhere in the north instead of shipping out of a southern base is one suggestion. You may want to take it into a location somewhere in the North for assembly before it is shipped up to the various north warning systems.

● (1815)

These are some of the ideas that I have received. I simply want to pass them on to the Minister and his Parliamentary Secretary today. I believe there will be tremendous opportunities from this. We know that it will not be a panacea for all our employment problems in the North but there will be hundreds and possibly thousands of person years of employment connected with this. We in the North would certainly like to get our fair share. I am satisfied that we will, provided some of these suggestions are taken into account.