

or labour representative chosen by the government on the recommendation of some member of this house, but representatives, according to their importance in the country, chosen by their own representative organizations.

Everywhere we went in industrial Britain we found labour representatives sharing public responsibility with the owners of industry and wealth. I was told that in the rural districts farmers and their labourers shared similar responsibilities. Such, of course, are essential links in an all-out war effort. Canada has been called in this house the arsenal of the British commonwealth; yet we have not equipped our own soldiers adequately. The story told by the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Ralston) of the gallant defenders of Hong Kong reflects little credit on those responsible for the sending of that expeditionary force.

I hope that the committee which the Prime Minister has promised will investigate all the circumstances with great thoroughness. In Montreal on January 6, addressing the Women's Canadian club there, I made a brief and passing reference of concern regarding the equipment and training of our troops at Hong Kong. Newspapers immediately designated those who expressed such sentiments as undermining our war effort. I wonder what those newspapers think now about that, or what they think of the harsh epithets applied by British speakers and British papers, including Lord Beaverbrook's own *Daily Express*, to those responsible for the lack of preparation in the far east. In my opinion the military and naval authorities who allowed our men to proceed to Hong Kong without anti-tank guns and adequate equipment and training, with the situation in the far east as tense as it was in late October, were guilty of negligence or ignorance. Had they read Lord Gort's report, the official dispatches on the battle of France? That report was published in Canada two weeks before the ill-fated Hong Kong expeditionary force sailed. Of that battle of France Lord Gort wrote:

So ended a campaign of twenty-two days which has proved that the offensive once more gained ascendancy in modern war when undertaken with an army equipped with greatly superior material power in the shape of air force and fighting vehicles.

After giving some examples of lack of equipment, Lord Gort continued:

These instances among many others serve to indicate the vital necessity for an expeditionary force, if it is to be used in a first class war, being equipped on a scale commensurate with the task it is called upon to fulfil. The day is past when armies can be hurriedly raised, equipped and placed in the field, for modern war demands the ever-increasing use of complicated material.

[Mr. Coldwell.]

But it is equally important to inquire under what circumstances a Hong Kong force was asked for, and under what considerations and agreements it was sent. Who took the responsibility for neglecting Brigadier Lawson's expressions of uneasiness on leaving without complete equipment? Did those who decided that the force was to be sent satisfy themselves that in the event of war the island of Hong Kong could be defended? Did they inquire as to its air defences, its artillery equipment, its water and other vital supplies? Or are we to infer that Canadian troops are being placed at the disposal of the imperial general staff without adequate control or inquiry on the part of our own Department of National Defence? If so, then the government has reversed the policy so vehemently maintained in the last war by Sir Robert Borden, and have relegated Canada to the position of colonial days.

It is clear that Canada, Australia and the dominions should be properly and of themselves represented on an allied council dealing with all matters of war strategy. This is most essential. The Minister of National Defence excuses the failure to send adequate equipment with the Hong Kong force on several grounds, one of which was that Japan suddenly and without warning struck in the Pacific. On Saturday last—and the report can be found in full in yesterday's *New York Times*—the Roberts commission in Washington reported the facts in connection with the attack on Pearl Harbour. The report shows that as early as January 24, 1941, the secretaries of the United States navy and of the United States army were discussing the gravity of the Pacific situation; that on October 16, 1941, twelve days before our men left Canada:

The commanding general, Hawaiian department, and the commander in chief of the fleet were advised by the war and navy departments . . . of the probability of hostilities between Japan and Russia and the possibility of an attack by Japan on Great Britain and the United States.

No doubt this view was also held in London, and I assume it was transmitted to Canada.

Then why, in the face of this information, and in view of Lord Gort's report, our experiences in Greece and in Crete and our difficulties in north Africa a year ago, were our troops, even such as were trained, allowed to proceed without equipment to an island which the public now knows could not possibly have been defended successfully?

The leader of the opposition (Mr. Hanson) said last Wednesday that there would be other Hong Kongs—