

Supply—National Defence

I noted the other day that Sir Anthony Eden, in replying to criticisms about his government's policy of continuing with the hydrogen bomb experiments on the Monte Bello islands, placed as the first of his government's considerations in that regard the consideration of national prestige. One can readily understand why Sir Anthony Eden and his government feel that way, because after all it is only a matter of a few years since Britain was one of the great leading powers of the world. It must be a bitter pill for the British people to feel that today there are, in effect, only two great powers in the world. One can forgive, I think, and understand the desire to maintain national prestige, even though quite obviously very little military advantage is to be gained from that procedure.

But Canada is in a totally different position. We have never been a great power. We have no long tradition of military superiority to maintain. We have, I think, the opportunity to achieve distinction and honour in the world by being one of the first nations in the world to turn our backs on the follies of military competition and to develop here in Canada, a society which will be a model worth emulating, so worth emulating that those who are uncommitted in the world will by force of example become committed to our side in the ideological struggle that lies behind these military considerations.

Mr. Low: Mr. Chairman, I do not intend to speak over long, but I should like the indulgence of the house if I take it just a bit slowly and attempt to deal with some of the things which I believe have been, and could be, called serious omissions in the government's program. We are setting out today, Mr. Chairman, on what could be and what I hope will be the most important debate of the present session of parliament. We are living in—and I think most of us realize it—the most dangerous time in the history of the world. There are two camps divided by a broad and almost uncrossable stream, and those two camps in the world are set against each other. It appears that every basis of trust between them has been destroyed and there is no possibility, as far as I can see, of any lengthy peaceful coexistence between them.

I think these are facts we pretty well have to face up to. The whole world lives in fear that some incident might come to catapult us into what could be called a third world war. If such a war should come, then there is a very large body of expert opinion that believes it will be a total war involving the use of nuclear weapons of tremendous destructive power. To me, to think of such

wholesale destruction is sickening, and it points up the necessity of doing everything we possibly can to prevent a major war of any kind breaking out.

Consequently I think it is understandable—it is to me—that emphasis on the part of the Canadian government should be placed on what is called the world's major deterrent, namely the long-range bombers of the United States strategic air command, armed with nuclear weapons, supplemented by our own.

I say it is understandable that emphasis should be placed by our government upon that strategic air command. This, of course, involves very close co-operation between Canada and the United States and the provision by Canada of our most efficient weapons, our most efficient mobile ground forces. I say the "most efficient" because I believe it would have to be the most efficient ground mobile force which our country is capable of raising.

We must do all we can, as other speakers have said, to ensure the adequacy of our defences in all three theatres, the air, the sea, and on the land. We in Canada cannot sit back and leave the defence of our country to our neighbours, the United States. There seems to be a growing opinion that this can be done, but to me it is unthinkable; to any red-blooded Canadian it would be. But we have to face the fact that defence costs are growing by leaps and bounds, and as the development of nuclear weapons goes forward our defences have to depend more and more upon very complex and costly apparatus.

We appear to have reached the point where the most penetrating consideration must be given to the problem of what should be Canada's role in the defence of North America and of the free world, facing up, as I said, to these facts about the tremendous costs that have to be met. Our population in Canada is small compared with the vastness of the territory that we have to defend, and there is a limit to the amount of money we can raise to spend on this costly equipment. How far can we go? I suppose the better way of asking that is, how far must we go, because to me it is unthinkable that we would not go as far as we must and as far as our strength and our resources would make it possible for us to go in any exigency that faced us.

During the past year there have been many outspoken criticisms of the government's defence policy by men eminently qualified by training and experience to be critics. These criticisms have caused commendable concern on the part of Canadians generally about the effectiveness of our defences. Many of us are wondering, however, if these criticisms