

● (9.45 a.m.)

The aim of this exercise, called "Winter Express" was to test procedures for the rapid deployment of the Mobile Force to this very cold and operationally difficult area. The multi-national force included our Canadian 1st Battalion of The Black Watch together with elements of the Corps of Engineers and Signals.

Winter Express was most successful and we were pleased indeed by the outstanding performance of all the Canadian Forces involved.

The trans-Atlantic airlift of our troops and equipment, including two helicopters, was handled expertly by seven Yukons and eleven Hercules C-130E aircraft from Air Transport Command. In addition, the Royal Canadian Navy's operational support ship, HMCS *Provider*, transported heavy equipment, including three heavy helicopters from Halifax to the unloading port in Norway, 200 miles north of the Arctic Circle. Twenty of the 1,013 Canadian soldiers taking part in Exercise Winter Express also travelled on the *Provider*.

At the end of the Exercise, the troops were brought back to Canada just as quickly and efficiently, pointing up the feasibility of long-range mobile force operations.

We have had reports from neutral observers who reported that the quick shakedown of our troops on their arrival and their obvious capability to operate under Arctic conditions compared most favourably with other participating nations. We also received gratifying comments from SHAPE senior officers on the highly efficient manner in which our stores and equipment were handled by the combined use of heavy transport aircraft and an operational support ship using transport helicopters to lift supplies from ship to shore.

In our opinion, this exercise points out in dramatic fashion the logic of our defence policy in developing mobile forces which can be air and/or sea lifted to trouble spots anywhere at any time of year.

Our contribution to the ACE force has been recognized by the request of General Lemnitzer, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe to appoint a senior Canadian army officer to command this force. Major General Gilles Turcot has been designated as Commander and he will take up his duties next fall.

Maritime Forces—Canada is also making a significant contribution to NATO through its naval and maritime air forces.

During this fiscal year, our fleet modernization program in the Royal Canadian Navy will continue. At the same time we will continue to examine critically the real contribution to the deterrence being made by our older ships.

It is the government's feeling, Mr. Chairman, that the continued operation of aging, expensive and difficult to maintain vessels is not a useful way in which to spend defence dollars. In this regard, we recently announced that four world war II frigates, now being maintained in reserve status, will be turned over shortly to Crown Assets for disposal. Their disposal will reduce the number of second world war frigates to six, one on the east coast and five on the west. One of those at Esquimalt will be placed in reserve this month, and on completion of summer training, it is intended that most or all of the frigates be placed in reserve, at which time their condition and remaining operational effectiveness will be examined, and appropriate action taken.