

Supply—National Defence

I would remind the minister that it is the militia which fights the wars. The professional soldier trains the militiaman and it is he who fights the wars. The role of the permanent force is to train these militiamen. On behalf of the people of Prince Edward-Lennox, on behalf of the youths who are voluntarily training and their parents who know the worth of this training in ensuring the development of alert, strong young men and women with high morals and character, I strongly protest the nefarious and negative policy of the minister and his department of abandoning these volunteer units and closing and disposing of the venerable buildings in which these young people have trained.

Mr. Brewin: Mr. Chairman, I had not intended to participate again in the discussion in committee but as I was not able to be here last evening I read with some interest the remarks made by the minister in which he purported to answer some of the questions asked during the course of the debate. It seems to me that he answered all the easy and superficial questions but completely ignored the more serious questions which were asked. I am going to ask him some of these questions once more in the hope that somehow he may be roused from the generalities in which he indulges so easily and persuaded to tell this committee some of the facts about what is being done by his department.

I asked him before and I ask him again, what force goals did Canada commit itself to in the recent discussions of the NATO council? Did these force goals involve the continued maintenance of the brigade group in the forward lines of NATO? Did the force goals to which we are committed involve the continuance of our obligation to maintain our strike reconnaissance force and, if so, for how long, one year or longer? Did the minister or any representative of Canada at any time during these discussions question the continued reliance of the NATO forces on a tactical nuclear response to any trouble which may emerge in Europe? Was there any discussion or suggestion on the part of Canada with regard to withdrawing our brigade group into a mobile reserve, a proposal made, I remind the minister, by the military commanders of NATO as long ago as 1960? Was this a part of these discussions or was it ignored?

Were any proposals made to end our reliance upon the tactical nuclear air strike forces in Europe and to substitute some other less vulnerable strike reconnaissance force? I

appreciate the fact that the minister has told us in the White Paper that he proposes to phase Canada out of these operations or to see to it that we do not get involved in them again. Was there any question about the substitution of a less vulnerable response to deal with such a situation?

• (3:40 p.m.)

In short, Mr. Chairman, I should like the minister to tell the committee frankly whether he or his government have done anything at all to carry out the pledge made by the Prime Minister before the election of 1963, or perhaps it was 1962, that Canada would negotiate out of the tactical nuclear role. Has any single step by way of notice, by way of discussion, by way of proposal in the NATO council to our NATO allies, been made to redeem this pledge? Or is it the fact that we are continuing precisely in the same roles that existed before this government took office? I suggest that instead of indulging in generalities such as, "We are in favour of a viable force," the minister should answer a few of the questions that have been asked him. When he says that at the NATO council we have realistic and attainable goals I hope that is correct. I hope they are realistic and attainable and, further, I hope it is not necessary to discuss that. But why must he tell us that "We are in favour of this" or "We are in favour of that" and other such meaningless generalities?

I suggest that if the house is to have any real knowledge or any real discussion as to where our defence policy is going members of the house require answers to questions that have been asked instead of being given the generalities that have been handed out. This is not the place for press releases.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Brewin: The House of Commons is the place for facts. Let us hear from the minister in regard to these matters.

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Chairman, after reading what the hon. gentleman said there is one observation I might make. It is that I do not think he has recently read the white paper and therefore does not know what we are doing by way of policy in this country.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Does that relieve you?

Mr. Hellyer: In so far as the specifics just raised are concerned, the agreement at the moment is that the country's annual return to the NATO inquiries will be the force goals, for this year. That is the situation. There are