

Supply—Civil Defence

be lost if we make an attempt and everything will be lost if nothing is attempted.

I also thank the hon. member who has just spoken for what he said about the civil defence workers who are doing their best with respect to a very difficult problem.

The suggestion was made about signs on the roads and so on. My hon. friend will, of course, understand that we work in full co-operation with the provinces. In the case of the province of Alberta they have a very good civil defence organization and I publicly thank the government there for its interest and endeavour in this particular field and my thanks are also extended to the local volunteer bodies. They take the view, and I must say I share this view, that we must not be too ostentatious until we have reason to be ostentatious.

I know the situation in the country to which my hon. friend referred. I lived in a hotel in New York last fall where there were all sorts of signs but there was not much behind them. The government at Alberta has taken the position, as most of the provincial governments have, that we ought to make sure not only that our plans are developed but that they are capable of execution before we create false impressions. There may be a midway position but I just mention that to indicate the way we feel about it.

With regard to the situation in Montreal, my hon. friend has taken a rather courageous course this morning and I commend him for it. As he knows, I have been greatly concerned about the fact that in the largest city of Canada there was a decision about a year and a half ago to undo the really great work that had been done by the city government and volunteer bodies. This was a regrettable thing. As the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre said, if Coventry won't defend Coventry, Her Majesty's government of the United Kingdom cannot.

All around Montreal there is now a group of communities that are engaged in doing work for civil defence. As the hon. gentleman said, I have talked to the present mayor on three occasions in connection with this matter during the course of the last five months. When I spoke in the committee I did express the hope—indeed I went further than that and said I expected—that results would flow from our discussions. I can only say to my hon. friend that I have not given up in that particular. When I asked him a question a moment ago concerning whether or not the volunteer group he had in mind had any association or connection with the city government officially he indicated that there had been some consultation. I know

[Mr. Martin.]

that a group has discussed the matter recently with the mayor and only ten days ago I myself discussed this matter with the mayor over the telephone. I have not given up.

Assuming that the city would not officially participate, my hon. friend asked what I would be prepared to do. I can only say I am prepared to consider that possibility. At the present time we have just concluded an arrangement with the government of the province of Quebec whereby they have given us permission to deal directly with the municipalities without going through them. I do not know whether it is on its way or whether it has actually been put forward but we have a submission to the treasury to permit us to deal directly with certain municipalities and also to be allowed to provide 25 per cent assistance without going through the government of the province.

My hon. friend's proposal goes one step further in that he suggests we should deal with a volunteer group. We must remember that in cities we have to deal with the fire departments, welfare department, police force and other groups which are a part of the organized community and which play a very essential role in the development of a city's civil defence organization. I may not fully satisfy my hon. friend by my assurance but at this stage I can only assure him that I will carefully examine the extent to which it would be possible to encourage a local body of this kind. It may be possible to establish some titular connection with the municipalities and I assure him I will be glad to pursue that question vigorously.

Mr. Hamilton (Notre Dame de Grace): Mr. Chairman, one brief question occurred to me while the minister was speaking. I wonder would he care to see personal representatives of the civil defence organization in Montreal and discuss possible arrangements with them.

Mr. Martin: I would be glad to.

Mr. Castleden: In his statement would the minister care to say something about the possibility of greater co-operation with the militia of Canada?

Mr. Martin: As I have said, I have already clearly indicated that in the discussion in the committee. There has been a change of policy there and the measure of co-operation between the defence forces and the civil defence organization is now on a firmer footing than it was before. In my own judgment there is an increasing role for certain groups in the armed forces. It may not be along the lines they are theoretically contemplating in the United Kingdom but along lines that I think would give the armed forces, and particularly the reserve forces, a greater role than they have had heretofore.