

Alleged Lack of Government Leadership

would be a great comfort to them to know they would have two bases in Canada which would play their part in defence after we get the missiles from the United States when the attack has begun.

Nothing could be more ridiculous than that policy. As long as there was any opportunity of changing that policy before the missiles were in place and before the stations had been acquired, we thought it should be changed. But the missiles are there now. The CF-101's are in the squadrons. The CF-104's are being delivered to the squadrons. If we have got so far, as the former minister of national defence is now pointing out, where these weapons are in place and where our men are expected to use them, we must now take that final step without which the other steps do not mean anything at all. We have just thrown away three quarters of a billion dollars. What we on this side say is this, and—I hope this will answer the Prime Minister, when he says that we have no policy. What we on this side say is this. The time having come for a decision—a decision which could have been avoided perhaps up until a year ago, as the minister of national defence admitted in his statement—we on this side think the government should make the decision; and if they do so, if they take the final step, we will support them in that step. If they refuse to do that, and if they leave our squadrons without the weapons, and if we have the responsibility, we will see that our men are armed with the weapons with which to carry out the role which this government gave them for Canada and which the Prime Minister admits now was given to them for Canada. However, that is not the whole story.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): He said so a week ago last Friday.

Mr. Pearson: Yes, he said so a week ago last Friday. Something which makes it all the worse, he said so in February, 1959. He makes that statement, "We will carry out our obligations", but he makes it impossible for the men who are in the field to do that. What we say is this, Mr. Speaker, and I repeat this. We say that we should honour our pledges, keep our promises, and put our forces in a position to do the job we have asked them to do for our country. We are not a country which welsches on its commitments. We are not a country which welsches on the means necessary to carry out our commitments.

It is perfectly true that in the literal sense we have discharged our commitment. We have got an air division in Europe and that is what we promised to do. But we promised more than that. We promised to give this air division the means to discharge a certain role and we have not done that. That goes also for the Bomarc bases and the interceptor

squadron. But having done that, and this is where the New Democratic party and, indeed the former minister of national defence misinterpret our policy completely, we reserve the right—this is one of the very first things we would do if we had the responsibility—to re-examine the whole basis of Canadian defence policy.

We said at the beginning that these were not the right things for Canadian forces to be doing, that we thought there was a better contribution that Canada could make inside the alliance, because we believe in the alliance. We differ from the New Democratic party in that respect, because on the evidence of the resolutions at the founding convention of their party they are dedicated to the proposition of getting rid of NATO and getting rid of the Warsaw pact at the same time. We on this side are not dedicated to any proposition of that kind.

They are also dedicated to the proposition that NATO itself should not become a nuclear power. I say, Mr. Speaker, and I think the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Green) will perhaps agree with me on this, that, even if the nuclear weapons may be under the custody of one country, if control can be shared in some effective way through a NATO coalition, if we can do that, if all NATO members agree on a NATO nuclear deterrent, then Canada should not contract out from contributing to that collective deterrent. If I felt that way I would advocate withdrawal from NATO. That is not extending the nuclear club but limiting the nuclear club. That is taking nuclear weapons out of national control and putting them under collective international control.

I should like to think that that is possible. I do not know whether it will be. It is going to be a very difficult thing indeed to do, but surely that is the line along which we should be moving, toward the isolation of the nuclear deterrent under NATO—we do not want to get this all mixed up with strategic nuclear bombs—as a kind of reserve force under NATO control, whoever may have custody of the weapons, so that if there is an attack of any kind on the NATO front line that attack can be met by conventional forces and held at least for the length of time required for the political decision to be taken on which the whole fate of the world may depend.

That seems to me to be a very intelligible position to take, and this does not mean that we on this side are in favour of nuclear weapons as such.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pearson: Certainly not.