

External Affairs in Parliament

STATEMENTS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

The purpose of this section is to provide a selection of statements on external affairs, by Ministers of the Crown or by their parliamentary assistants. It is not designed to provide a complete coverage of debates on external affairs taking place during the month.

A Compelling Deterrent

Excerpts from an address on Canada's defence given by Mr. R. O. Campney, Minister of National Defence, in Committee of Supply of the House of Commons, June 20, 1956.

A year ago, when I opened my remarks on the defence estimates, I did so by referring to the profound effect that nuclear weapons and fast, far-ranging jet bombers to carry them were having on all our thinking about defence. This, again, must be my opening thought today.

It is now 11 years since the first atomic explosion marked a new departure in warfare—more startling perhaps than any other since gunpowder first came into use some 700 years ago. And then, almost before we could begin fully to comprehend the terrifying possibilities of atomic weapons, the H-bomb added a vastly more far-reaching formidable dimension of terror and destruction—so comprehensive indeed that we cannot yet begin to assess its full magnitude.

No simple, clear-cut, complete answer to the defence problem thus poised has yet been found; and, frankly, as far as I can see, none is yet in sight. Is it any wonder, then, that throughout the free world there is dispute and controversy as to how this problem can be resolved? Is it any wonder that protagonists of this view or that, of this service or that service, of this defence element or that defence element, are so eagerly and at times vociferously projecting their particular views on a confused and worried public.

This active preoccupation with finding answers to the new weapons may ultimately bring us to the point where defence catches up with the offensive, which is now so far out in front in the race. I suppose that, if this balance is redressed, as it has been from time to time over the years in the past, war must then become an even less attractive adventure to aggressively-minded nations than it is today.

No nation ever wants to risk defeat; and that revulsion is made so much the stronger by awareness of how terrible defeat in thermonuclear war could be. And yet the threat of war continues. As long as this is true, our best hope is, undoubtedly, in the maintenance of a strong compelling deterrent. Primarily, of course, this deterrent at present is based on the strategic air force of the United States, now being augmented by that of Great Britain. But, to be effective, such strategic air forces must be supplemented by warning lines to enable their retaliatory planes to get off the ground immediately an attack is launched on the free world anywhere. They must also be supplemented by fighter air power to blunt the edge of the thermonuclear attack. They must also be again supplemented by well-trained, efficient ground forces to form a shield to prevent Europe being suddenly overrun by ground forces of an