

*National Defence*

is one particular statement that was made last year which calls for a definite explanation. On February 5 of last year, after outlining the other obligations to which he has now referred, he made this statement, and I quote his words as reported at page 95 of *Hansard* of February 5, 1951:

In addition to whatever army forces we have in Europe, our army role in NATO is to provide a strategic reserve.

Now we are told about a brigade and the squadrons of the R.C.A.F. But what of the strategic reserve? How big is that strategic reserve? If our policy has not changed, what was the strategic reserve agreed upon last year, and what was the strategic reserve agreed upon at Lisbon a short time ago? What is the strategic reserve for which the defence organization is being built in this country at this time? That is what we want to know. Surely that is part of the \$2,100 million that we shall be discussing. Even if we cannot have the details at the moment, let us know what the force is, so that we may discuss this matter with some appearance of reality. Let no one in this house suggest that the strategic reserve referred to on February 5 of last year is in any way to be confused with the term "reserve" which we employ in describing our non-permanent military forces in Canada. These reserve forces are not the kind of strategic reserve which was referred to on February 5. A strategic reserve is a strategic force available to be moved into one area or another, depending upon the strategic considerations of the moment. Every student of the history of the last world war knows that, above everything else, it was the absence of a strategic reserve in France that spelled the doom of the French army at the time that Guderian made that tremendous sweep past Sedan through to the coast. I leave that question of what strategic reserve really is and what land forces constitute it, because it is the army that we are talking about, not the air force or the navy.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the minister's democratic duty to this House of Commons, where the people of Canada are represented by their chosen representatives, is to come to this house at this time and report frankly to us so that we may be informed, and invite at the same time from the members of this house opinions, criticism and debate, and not to brand criticism and alternative suggestions as something that may interfere with the defence preparations of Canada.

The Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) anticipates the statements before they are made and says that any statements that will be made may weaken the defence of

this country. The minister seemingly comes to this house only to invite the desk-thumping of those who sit behind him, and not to carry out his duties to the people of Canada at this very solemn hour in our history. I say this to the minister with the utmost earnestness. If any man in this country at this time rises in this house to say that our defence preparations are all that they should be, and that there are no weaknesses to be corrected, then that man loves applause more than he loves the truth.

The members of this house know perfectly that there are many things about which we should be told, and they want an opportunity to examine the estimates that will presently be before us with some knowledge of what we are actually to do as a nation. Instead of being told what we may usefully do as members in this house we are told of the great things being planned; never of the things that we have, always of the dreams of tomorrow, which, when they are fulfilled, are going to surpass the dreams that will be known in any other country in the world.

Canada has too proud a record of actual achievement in the field and in defence generally for any Canadian to need to go beyond reality. Canadians have never shown themselves unready to face the responsibility of the hour whenever the test came, and Canadians are ready to face whatever their responsibilities are today. The hard-pressed taxpayers of Canada, however, are now asked for \$750 from the head of every family of five—and it is every head of a family of five on the average, no matter how these taxes are levied—and they want to know that we are getting a dollar's worth for every dollar spent, and that we are getting real defence for this enormous sum which is being spent.

My remarks are related to a positive proposal to which I referred yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and which I repeat at this time. I do urge the minister, no matter how satisfied he may be with most aspects of the defence preparation, to recognize that it is his duty, that it is our duty, that it is the duty of everyone who has anything to do with defence in any way, to see if savings cannot be made, and if we cannot produce results with the expenditure of less money than is now being called for under the estimates before us.

We are not suggesting any weakening of our efforts; we are suggesting that they be strengthened with the immense industrial and technical possibilities of Canada. We are saying: Place more hitting power in the hands of each individual soldier. That is the great thing that is possible in a highly developed industrial country such as Canada. Let us