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FIVE YEARS OF CIVIL DEFENCE

An address by the Minister of National Health and Welfare, Mr. Paul Martin, delivered to the Windsor Lions Club, November 25, 1953.

Civil Defence Progress Report

I should like to take advantage of this occasion to make a progress report to the people of Canada on this country's rapidly developing civil defence programme. It is now more than a year since I have given a national review of what has been accomplished by all levels of government and by the many voluntary groups and other interested agencies who are participating in our civil defence preparations. Since that time, encouraging progress, on the whole, has been made in bringing Canada's total civil defence programme to a more adequate and more realistic level.

Perhaps the best evidence of the determination of Canadians to do something about civil defence is the fact that, in no less than 558 Canadian communities, civil defence organizations are now in existence. More than 100 communities, of which Windsor is an outstanding example, are organized and trained by services. The remainder are in various intermediate stages of organization.

To man these local organizations, more than 133,000 people have been enrolled for various civil defence duties. It is hoped that this total -- which includes both civil government employees and citizen volunteers -- will be very substantially increased over the next twelve months.

I mention the extent of local organization across the country as a gauge by which to measure progress because, in civil defence, local effort and local initiative are all important. Most local authorities have tackled the problem vigorously and realistically, but there is no question that more could still be done. I would be derelict in my duty if I did not report that, in some parts of Canada, the attention being given to the protection of our civilian population falls short of what I conceive to be our collective responsibility in the light of present world unrest.

The Need for Civil Defence

While Canada, with other freedom-loving nations, is making every effort to secure world peace through diplomatic negotiation at the United Nations and by building in NATO a defensive strength that will discourage aggression, we must recognize that the threat of war may continue for a generation or more. If we should be forced to accept war, we would have to accept danger to ourselves at home as well as to our servicemen abroad. It is but the beginnings of common-sense to make reasonable preparations, within the framework of our total defence effort, for the protection of our civilian population and of our essential community services.

There was a time in human history when wars were fought on distant battlefields, far remote from the ordinary work-a-day life of the communities that were being defended. But today, the development of modern weapons has whittled away the security once conferred on us by the simple facts of geography. No longer can we enjoy the sheltered isolation that was our sure protection in the past.

Until very recent years, our obligations of citizenship have been twofold:

- to respect the rule of law in time of peace; and
- to defend our country abroad in time of war.

But in the tragic event of any future war, we may be required for the first time to share in defending our own communities, our own families and our own homes against direct enemy attack. Thus, civil defence has added a third dimension to citizenship.

The most important targets for any possible future enemy attack on Canada would be those localities which make the most vital contribution to the country's war-making capacity. It is not improbable that the first assaults would be made on concentrated industrial areas, key military installations, or centres which are of strategic importance to the nation.

During his recent visit to Ottawa, President Eisenhower reminded us that our security plans must now take into account Soviet ability to employ atomic attack on North America. I need hardly emphasize how vital it would be to have advance warning of enemy attack on any Canadian community. Just as aircraft have broken through the sound barrier, modern weapons have wiped out the time barrier that once afforded a degree of protection. As a result, the warning of such an attack would be measured, not in days or months, but in precious hours and minutes.

Canada's Advance Warning System

Let me take a few minutes to outline the steps that have been taken by the Federal Government so that provincial and local organizations can be alerted to the danger of enemy air attack. Obviously, I cannot for security reasons, discuss in detail the preparations that have been undertaken, but I can roughly outline the sequence of events.

First of all, the Armed Forces have established a radar network to cover the main industrial area of Canada and the United States which will use all possible means to detect and identify strange aircraft. As the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Slemon, recently noted, its standards of vigilance will be such that improperly identified planes blundering into the radar web will run the risk of jet attack. Effective procedures have, of course, been worked out to ensure the safety of friendly planes engaged in legitimate activities.

To supplement the work of this radar network, a ground observer corps of civilian volunteers, now numbering some 50,000, will carry out continuous observations from strategically-located observation posts.

Information gathered by this protective screen of military and civilian personnel across Canada will flow into a number of strategically-located Air Defence Control Centres. At these centres, experts will assess the information received and determine the strength and direction of any attacking force.

I am able to announce today that a joint arrangement has been worked out with the Department of National Defence for the employment of a full-time Civil Defence Liaison Officer at R.C.A.F. Air Defence Command Headquarters. In addition, a Senior Civil Defence Warning Controller and four assistant controllers will be employed, on a part-time basis, at each Air Defence Control Centre. These civilian officers, members of the federal civil defence organization, will be charged with alerting immediately the civil defence authorities in those areas lying in the path of the predicted enemy attack.

When the advance warning has been given to the Civil Defence Warning Controller and passed on by him to the target areas affected, it then becomes the responsibility of the local alarm system to alert the police, fire, health, welfare and other services, and to warn the general public.

The civil defence warning system, which is now in full operation, provides direct line service to twenty-two cities across Canada. The system is also tied in with the U.S. Federal Civil Defence Warning System by trans-border tie-lines at such points as Windsor and Detroit, Sarnia and Port Huron and Niagara Falls.

For added protection, and to provide for warning to communities not included in the direct line service, alternative communication facilities have been established which utilize the services of provincial police and forestry radio networks, amateur radio services, mobile communication centres, ship-shore radio facilities, radio-equipped taxis and the normal telephone and telegraph services.

To provide for public warning within target areas, the Federal Government has purchased four hundred 5-horsepower and 2-horsepower 2-tone sirens, complete with control apparatus, for all target areas. More than one hundred of these sirens have already been installed in cities across Canada.

The Importance of Local Effort

Once the warning has been given, the operational responsibility for civil defence falls upon the local organization. The aims of civil defence are to reduce loss of life; to provide medical and other assistance to the civilian population; to restore public utilities as quickly as possible; to minimize property damage; and to ensure the continuation of essential war production. These aims can best be achieved by those authorities which, in normal times, have the responsibility for maintaining the facilities and public services of our complex modern communities.

In this connection, I might point out that an important principle of civil defence is that it utilizes all existing facilities and services, and augments these by training auxiliaries -- for example: auxiliary policemen, fire-fighters, and so on. That is one reason why local responsibility for the operational aspect of civil defence is so essential. It would represent an unwarranted intrusion on local rights and would only make for inefficiency, were the Federal Government, for instance, to step in and take over the operation of a community's fire, police, or public health services.

I want to emphasize that the federal role in civil defence is primarily that of a guiding and co-ordinating agency rather than that of an operational authority. That the Federal Government is undertaking its full responsibilities in this important field is best indicated perhaps by the fact that, on a per capita basis, our annual federal commitments for civil defence exceed those of our good neighbours to the south.

As I have implied, civil defence in Canada is a co-operative effort in which there has been an excellent spirit of collaboration between governments at the various levels and the many non-governmental agencies that have given their support to this vital activity. Civil Defence, perhaps more than any other field of action, points up the problems -- but, at the same time, underlines the inherent strength -- of the federal system of government. On the one hand we have had to face and solve the complex questions presented by our constitutional divisions in jurisdictional responsibility. On the other hand, because of the very fact that we operate under a federal system rather than through one single central government, we enjoy the distinct advantage of being able to work through small local governments which are in close daily contact with the individual citizen.

Thus, while we have learned valuable lessons from the experience of other countries, notably the United States and the United Kingdom, we in Canada have had to keep in mind that these lessons can only be of value if they are adapted to our own particular conditions and needs. Besides the distinctive federal structure of our government, questions of climate, geography and so on, all affect the nature of our planning.

For example, organizational patterns that may well apply in densely-populated Britain -- a unitary state with many large cities, short lines of communication, and subject to the risk of continuous attack because of its

proximity to Continental Europe -- may very well be inapplicable to a federal state like Canada with its vast territory, its long lines of communications, its severe weather, its scattered population, and its small number of large cities, situated, as they are, several thousand miles from the land bases of any potential enemy.

Some Highlights of the Federal Programme

I have dealt with the role of the Federal Government in providing advance warning of enemy attack. Now let me list a few further federal activities to indicate the way in which we are attempting to give guidance and assistance to provincial and municipal authorities in the development of realistic and responsible plans for the defence of our civilian population.

-- A federal Civil Defence College, which will shortly move to more adequate quarters, is now in full operation and is training 1,500 key workers and instructors each year. These persons, in turn, pass on this training to many thousands at the provincial and local levels.

-- Over 70,000 respirators and substantial quantities of helmets, anti-gas suits, and other protective clothing, together with a smaller quantity of radiation detection instruments, have been issued to the provinces for the use of civil defence workers.

-- 50 self-propelled, fully-equipped fire engines are being provided to the provinces at a cost of more than \$600,000.

-- Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario have taken advantage of the federal offer to pay one-third of the cost of standardizing fire hose-couplings. Commitments have already been made for federal expenditures of some \$500,000 under this programme.

-- Since 1952, federal grants of \$1,400,000 a year have been available, on a matching basis, for approved provincial civil defence projects. As yet only the four Western provinces and Newfoundland have taken advantage of this federal offer.

-- The Federal Government has also entered into agreements with the provinces to share the expense of providing compensation for injury to civil defence workers.

-- Detailed plans are being worked out for the active support of civil defence by the Armed Forces under arrangements similar to those where the Armed Forces support civilian authorities in cases of national disaster.

-- Over a million copies of various manuals, pamphlets and other literature have been distributed and a vigorous program of public education through press, radio, billboards, exhibits and films is in progress.

-- A medical stockpiling programme has been initiated to ensure that adequate quantities of essential medical supplies would be available in the event of any major wartime or peacetime disaster.

-- A formal agreement has been concluded with the United States providing for mutual assistance and support in the same manner as if there were no border.

-- To ensure co-operation with other friendly nations, Canada has become a member of the NATO Civil Defence Co-ordinating Committee, and the Federal Civil Defence Co-ordinator, Major-General Worthington, has attended its first two meetings.

In addition to these specific achievements, progress has been made in a number of other important fields. For example, an overall health plan has been developed to provide a working pattern for the development of emergency health services. This includes, among other things, the utilization of existing and improvised hospital facilities; the provision of medical and nursing care for the injured; the development of laboratory and other clinical services; the restoration and maintenance of a safe water supply and other sanitary services; and the supply of blood and blood substitutes for transfusion purposes.

Special committees have also been set up by the Federal Government to blueprint the development of welfare services; to plan the most effective use of transportation and communication facilities; and to advise on industrial plant protection. Through these committees and those studying other aspects of civil defence, detailed plans have been worked out with the assistance of the best technical advice available.

For example, the Advisory Committee on Industrial Plant Protection -- a matter of the utmost importance to a great manufacturing centre like Windsor -- is representative of leading industrialists. The loss of any one of Windsor's busy plants in time of war, or the interruption or lessening of its productive capacity would greatly lessen the war potential of the nation. For this reason the protection of industrial plants must be regarded as an integral part of our total civil defence preparations.

A Steadily Developing Programme

These, then, are some of the areas of civil defence achievement. It is now just five years since a federal Civil Defence Co-ordinator was first appointed. Since that time, the programme has developed in three stages.

Stage One -- 1948 - 1950:

The period from 1948 to 1950 could be regarded as Stage One -- the period of planning. During this stage, the programmes of other countries were studied, Canadian needs were assessed; the views of the provinces were solicited; and agreement was reached on the division of

responsibility between the various levels of government. In other words, this was the period of paper planning that must precede the development of a sound practical programme.

Stage Two -- 1951 - 1952:

The years 1951 and 1952 marked the beginning of the more active phase of civil defence preparation -- Stage Two -- the development of concrete organization, recruiting and training at the various levels. During this period training facilities were improved; recruiting of volunteer workers was stepped up; and the public information programme was greatly intensified. In short, civil defence became a going concern.

Stage Three -- 1953 ---:

The intensive work undertaken in 1951 and 1952 made it possible to move into the operational stage during the present year. Now that it has entered its operational phase, Canada's civil defence programme is coming more into public view and requires public support on a much wider scale.

To help encourage this public interest, the convoy, "On Guard, Canada", is presently touring the country and is arousing interest and attention wherever it goes. An here I might say that this project is an outstanding example of co-operative action.

The original display was a loan from the United States Government, adapted to meet Canadian conditions. Trucks and tractor trailers were provided free of charge or at nominal rentals. Gasoline, tires and other items of necessary equipment were donated by various industrial concerns. The Canadian Automotive Transportation Association provided top-flight drivers to move this great motorcade across the country. Everywhere the show has gone, interested business and industrial organizations have donated good-will advertising to encourage public interest. Finally, in every city it has visited, the local civil defence organization has taken over responsibility for manning the show.

To test the effectiveness of our civil defence organizations, a number of operational exercises have already been carried out including one at Niagara Falls last June which demonstrated the tremendous value of mutual aid between the United States and Canada. Last June, operational exercises were carried a stage further when a very ambitious joint interprovincial-interstate exercise was held involving Alaska, British Columbia, Alberta, Washington, Oregon and California.

As we have gradually advanced from the planning and organizational stage, through the recruiting and training stages, and finally into the present operational stage, the record, I think, has been one of responsible progress at a steady and unspectacular pace. We have tried to avoid the extremes of apathy on the one hand and hysteria on the other. We have attempted to maintain a perspective by focusing our attention on a realistic recognition of the dangers that confront us today.

The Need for Continued Effort

While the record of the past five years is marked with progress, there is still room for improvement. Development across the country has been by no means uniform. Some provinces and some cities have done an outstanding job; others have fallen somewhat short of what might be expected of them; a small minority have little or nothing to report in the way of concrete progress.

The objective of the period immediately ahead is to consolidate our gains and to encourage those provinces and those communities which have not yet reached the national standard to catch up with the others. This is of the utmost importance for, in civil defence, the safety and security of one community, or even of one country, may depend to a very large extent on the ability of its neighbouring community or country to come to its aid in the event of emergency.

In conclusion, let me stress that the value of civil defence to a community goes far beyond its immediate objectives. Besides their potential for protection in time of war, civil defence measures can have valuable peace-time application as well. In a serious peace-time disaster, a well-equipped and properly-trained civil defence force can be of inestimable value in maintaining public morale and in restoring normal conditions quickly in the stricken community. Recent disaster experiences have demonstrated conclusively that cities with well-organized civil defence services are able to cope with the situation much more effectively than those where civil defence organizations are deficient or non-existent.

The peace-time application of civil defence measures serves to underline one essential fact: that every civil defence activity has a humanitarian purpose, for the object of civil defence is not destruction but restoration - not to take life but to save it.

Preparation for civil defence is an immense task that can only succeed with widespread public interest and support. The best shield for Canada's civilian population is for this country and for other free countries to make sure, by growing strong, that war does not come. If, tragically, in company with the free nations, our efforts to keep the peace should fail, then we must be ready to meet the full weight of enemy attack. This can only be done if Canadians are prepared to stand up to any disaster in mature awareness of their responsibilities of citizenship.

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