

*Supply—National Defence*

amongst the air staff, himself, the government, NATO and the general staff? What is the arrangement whereby these things are discussed and decisions reached, and who makes the final decision?

In other words, I would like to know, not just for my own information, but I think I can speak, although I have not got the right to because I cannot—well, I will say it—on behalf of high ranking officers of the R.C.A.F. who have been in a position where they have been stultified, stupefied, not knowing what to do because they had no authority to do it. I knew, even up to two weeks ago—if you ask me to name the R.C.A.F. man you could crucify me because I am not giving his name—that the R.C.A.F. to my knowledge were sitting wondering and waiting for what was to be done, what was going to be the decision? They were wondering what was going to happen to our squadrons in Europe and what was going to happen here in Canada. I have never been called a liar in my life and no one is going to call me one now, but I say that that is something which is inside the armed forces, Mr. Minister of National Defence, whether you like it or not. It is a position of complete indecision because there is no unification. There is no chain of authority and there is no chain of decision.

I should like the Minister of National Defence to stand up in this committee right now and tell us what is the chain of consultation, what is the chain of decision, what is the chain of authority; who makes the final, authoritative decisions on policy, on planes, on equipment and on the armed forces. I use the occasion of this vote to ask that question. I am going to say to the Minister of National Defence, that he will make the greatest contribution to the morale of the armed services and to the brass hats of the army if he will announce where authority lies, where decision lies, where the responsibility lies. It is repetitious, but I am going to repeat that if the minister would get rid of the confusion which I know existed up until last week by laying down something which will be on record in *Hansard* as to where the authority lies, he will have done more than any previous minister of national defence has done toward building up the esprit de corps and morale of the armed forces. But, particularly, I ask him the question: what is the chain of consultation and command; who makes the decisions relative to policy and equipment and aircraft for the R.C.A.F. under vote No. 221?

**Mr. Pearkes:** Mr. Chairman, the chain of command for the R.C.A.F. and the other national armed forces is described in the charts at the end of the white paper.

[Mr. Winch.]

**Mr. Winch:** That doesn't mean a thing.

**Mr. Pearkes:** Simply because you cannot understand plain English. These charts show exactly the commands of the R.C.A.F. It is all explained in this paper. The chief of the air staff is the senior officer of the R.C.A.F. He is advised by an air council. He makes his recommendations, if they concern the administration of the air force, to me directly, and if they raise questions of defence policy they go to the chiefs of staff committee who then make their recommendation to the Minister of National Defence. If it is within his powers, he makes the decision himself, but otherwise he refers it to the cabinet.

**Mr. Winch:** Can I ask the Minister of National Defence who was the general officer commanding western command and who is one of the best known of the generals of Canada and who has now been Minister of National Defence for two years, if he honestly believes that the white paper contains the answer to these questions, because if so he is far more naive than I ever thought he would be.

**The Deputy Chairman:** Shall this vote carry?

**Mr. Pearson:** No. It is a long time since the government or the department has had to make a more important decision in the field of military equipment than the one they have made in respect to the reinforcement of a major part of the Canadian air force which is now to continue its service overseas under NATO. That requirement indicates that the division is going to be given a new role, that of strike fighter, and no more important role could be conferred on a division than this. And therefore, Mr. Chairman, it is surely of the greatest importance that we should get all the information we possibly can in respect to this decision which was made to re-equip the division with a particular plane concerning which we have doubts in comparison to other planes which were designed for the same purpose.

So we on this side hope that the minister will be able to deal tomorrow with some of the questions which have been raised by my hon. friend from Trinity in expressing doubt as to the suitability of this particular aircraft in comparison with others, and we shall have other questions to ask the minister on that point. More particularly, we should like to hear from the minister the reasons why this particular plane was chosen, the procedure which was followed, the examination and the tests which were given to other planes, and information on all those matters which must have been in the minds of the government before they took this important