

Supply—National Defence

As found in yesterday's *Hansard*, page 1566, the Minister of National Defence had this to say:

Mr. Chairman, experience with the F-5 in Viet Nam indicated that the Canadian CF-5 will be absolutely first class in the ground support role.

What are the facts about this airplane? Something like ten countries have bought it. They include the Philippines, Spain, Norway, Canada, and South Viet Nam. What was the actual result of the experiment in South Viet Nam? To answer that may I quote from the August, 1965, edition of *Canadian Aviation*, page 16:

The need became apparent for a supersonic aircraft that could operate from rough short fields, was undemanding in terms of manpower as well as of money, and was cheap to operate and maintain. This has revived hope for a U.S.A.F. order for the F-5.

The article continues:

It was reported last month—

That would be in July:

—that a special U.S.A.F. unit equipped with 18 of these aircraft is to be deployed in South Viet Nam this fall for combat evaluation. It is expected—

Here is the important point of this quotation:

—that an initial U.S.A.F. order for about 200 of the improved F-5's will result.

• (5:10 p.m.)

Now we know the facts. What happened? The minister could not wait for the evaluation of this test. He could not wait to get exact results. The article states they were in use in South Viet Nam as early as July. The minister, as nearly as I can gather, announced his decision to buy the planes on October 19, 1965. What action did the government of the United States take? Did they go ahead and buy 200 of the improved F-5s, as this article suggests, because the 18 planes which were in Viet Nam were so successful? No. The United States government on June 24 passed sentence. In President Johnson's message to Congress sentence was passed on the F-5. Did this alter the position of the Minister of National Defence? He could not wait until January before buying these planes. He could not wait until a proper evaluation had been undertaken.

An hon. Member: He got a discount.

Mr. Horner (Acadia): I think he was sold a bill of goods by Northrop Aviation. How good is this plane and can Canada use it? That is the question. The minister dealt at great length last night with the refueling equipment possessed by this aircraft. He told us how the F-5 could be refueled in the air. I

[Mr. Horner (Acadia).]

suggest that this equipment had better be good and that we should be certain the plane can be refueled in the air because it has a combat range of only 300 miles according to the specifications set out in the August edition of *Canadian Aviation*. I would like to ask the minister to tell us how many times this plane has run out of gas and how many crashes have been caused because it could not get back to base and there was no other plane in the sky to refuel it. Surely before the minister plows ahead spending the taxpayers' money he should take a second look now that the United States has so coldly turned down this plane.

The article continues:

There are of course some disadvantages. For example, the limited range of the F-5 is only partly compensated by inflight refueling facilities.

Remember, this is an article very much in favour of this plane, an article intended to convince the public that this is the plane Canada should be buying. Even so it contains an admission that there are some drawbacks. After listening to the minister's explanation last evening I suppose we should all be thoroughly convinced that this is the perfect plane in every way.

The second question which the defence committee should study is the whole matter of the purchase of these planes at a cost of some \$215 million. We do not even know whether this will be the final price because the minister spoke of many modifications which would be incorporated during the manufacture of this aircraft. At no time did he say the cost would not escalate.

I should like the minister to tell us before this estimate passes that the whole nuclear question, in addition to the purchase of the F-5, will be referred to the Committee on Defence. We have seen in this country on past occasions vast expenditures incurred for military equipment only to find that a year or two later the equipment had to be scrapped and that the money had been wasted. This is precisely what is pointed out in the article I have before me. It says:

The pocketbook of the longsuffering taxpayer who in the past has often shelled out money for military hardware of doubtful utility must be spared as much as possible when a modern weapons system is being purchased.

This is the whole basis of our argument with regard to this aircraft. This is why I say the minister should in fairness to himself and to the public allow the Defence Committee to study this question. The Defence Committee should call in experts from the United States