

*Refitting of HMCS "Bonaventure"*

This responsibility on behalf of the taxpayers has been handled in the committee report that was released in connection with the *Bonaventure* inquiry. For the record, the report appears in *Votes and Proceedings* No. 122 dated May 13. I should like to take this opportunity to commend the members of the committee for the excellent work they did. I say this without any reservation. New ground was being broken. The members of the committee went into the full story. As one who has studied the report many times in minute detail, I can say that I believe they did a good job of which we should all be proud. They came up with an unanimous report as everybody knows. This is even more to their credit.

The political responsibility, the second responsibility to which I have referred, however, is still very much up in the air. A great deal should be said about this. In referring to the report, I should like specifically to draw attention to items 5 and 6 of the general conclusions and recommendations. Since these will form part of the basis for our motion today, I think I should read them. The first is item 5, which appears on page 775:

The Committee recommends that the departments concerned determine the reasons why departmental officers involved in the refit performed in the manner they did and also to take appropriate action to ensure that such inefficiency be eliminated in the future. This will require changes to the system under which they work and may require disciplinary action in regard to personnel involved.

Then, item 6 is as follows:

The Committee fails to understand why the Deputy Ministers of National Defence and Defence Production, realizing that the cost of the refit of the *Bonaventure* was, month by month, getting out of control, did not order an "on-the-job" investigation.

Those are the two pertinent items on which we base our motion. For an authority in respect of this motion I should like to refer to Dawson on "The Government of Canada". This is a reputable political book. It is not one of these political histories written by Pickersgill or LaMarsh. He is an oracle.

**An hon. Member:** Or Trudeau.

**Mr. Bell:** Added to the list is another well-known historian who is now in this Parliament. The following words, which appear on page 219, I believe are pertinent in this regard:

The minister can never afford to forget—

I shall deal with that later.

—that he will be expected to defend and justify his department's policies before Parliament and the

country, and yet at the same time he realizes that those policies must be technically and administratively sound if they are to meet the need which has called them into being. Success in administration, said Walter Bagehot, "depends on a due mixture of special and non-special minds—of minds which attend to the means, and of minds which attend to the end."

I interject here to say that in this case the minister who has primary responsibility also has the background of the two minds. He has the full civil service background. In fact, he is the number one leader of the civil service establishment and, of course, he has made the big jump into active politics. He is a member of the treasury bench. He is the oracle of everything that is right and wrong in this country. I continue the quotation:

Inasmuch as the minister is politically responsible for everything done in his department, he is given supreme authority, and he therefore has the power to overrule any of his civil servants at any time. They, for their part, give the best advice they can; and if the minister persists in disregarding it—as he has a perfect right to do—they must then acquiesce, and bend all their energies to the problem of making the best of what they are convinced is a mistaken policy. The minister has the privilege of overruling his civil servants even although it involves the making of blunders, and the minister also has the privilege of defending those blunders in Parliament and suffering, if need be, for them.

I think, because it is of further significance, that we should look at the Glassco Commission report which some people may think is more up to date. I refer to Volume 1 at page 32, under the heading "Unlimited Liability" of Ministers. The report reads:

Concurrently with the development of the "public" service concept, it has become established that direct accountability to Parliament and to the public is imposed only on ministers. Public servants continue to be answerable for their honesty and competence to their ministers, through the ascending scale of their departments, but they bear none of the political consequences of their acts.

I quote further from the same page:

Since the emergence of this principle, it has been accepted that ministers are accountable for all the administrative acts of their departmental staffs.

There are many quotations which could be added to these. It is also pertinent, in establishing the basis for this debate, to point out that the Financial Administration Act, Part I, Organization, deals extensively with these responsibilities. To give an idea of how the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) would become involved—and I am sure he knows about this—I should like to quote, for example, section 5(2)(f):

such of the provisions of any other Act respecting any matter in relation to which the Treasury Board