

*Oral Questions*

other concerns. Whether they will let me know in advance by way of a suggested agenda or whether we will raise the subject informally when we meet is something which will be determined by the premiers and myself.

● (1420)

I repeat at this time that I have made a suggestion to them in line with our collectively expressed hopes at the last meetings, that we would try to meet in this way. If the premiers have other views, I would gladly entertain them.

**Mr. Lawrence:** I wonder if the Prime Minister could at least undertake that the premiers will be canvassed as to whether there will be an open meeting or a closed meeting—and I certainly hope it will be open—and that the public at large and the members of this House would know in advance what the agenda is and the terms of that agenda.

**Mr. Woolliams:** Why all the secrecy?

**Mr. Trudeau:** The hon. member asks why all the secrecy. I think hon. members will understand that in the matter of 10 provincial premiers and the federal government trying to decide whether the price of oil at the wellhead in Alberta and Saskatchewan should remain at \$8 or go up to some other figure, it is not likely that great amounts of public discussion will bring us any closer to a unanimous feeling. There was a meeting between the energy ministers just a few weeks ago. They spent quite some time trying to make progress toward a common position, and they were unable to do so.

**Mr. Stanfield:** That was in private.

**Mr. Trudeau:** That was in private. I doubt whether within this House or within the Tory Party there is any one feeling on what the price of energy should be. If the members of the Tory Party could open their caucuses to the public so that we would be hearing their discussions on the price of oil, perhaps they could reach unanimity, and then that would prove—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

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**NATIONAL DEFENCE****REASON FOR ALLOCATING SUCH A LARGE PROPORTION OF DEFENCE BUDGET TO PURCHASE "ORION"**

**Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Defence. In his recent television interview the minister acknowledged that the spending of approximately \$1 billion on 18 Orion aircraft is based primarily on the assumption that they will head off a war of attrition in continental Europe by ensuring protective covering for convoys, a view of war which I would have thought disappeared in about 1945, and since most of the defence budget's allocation for new equipment for the next four or five years will go into the Orion aircraft, which the government concedes, would the minister explain briefly to the House why the government is putting all its eggs in this particular basket?

[Mr. Trudeau.]

**Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence):** Mr. Speaker, we are not putting all our eggs in this basket, but we do have very strong reasons for wanting to proceed. As I have already explained to the house, this aircraft is the most cost effective of any of the alternatives. Its purchase also provides the greatest number of industrial benefits to Canada. However, in addition to that, this aircraft meets several major objectives of this country which have been mentioned in this House for the last three or four years. First, we will be obtaining new equipment for the Canadian armed forces.

**Mr. Forrestall:** Is that a promise?

**Mr. Richardson:** We will be meeting our commitment to the NATO alliance.

**Mr. Woolliams:** First time.

**An hon. Member:** When?

**Mr. Richardson:** Most important of all, as a sovereign nation this country will be able to know what is going on in the oceans which surround Canada.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Broadbent:** In his answer, the minister confirmed that he is preparing in a magnificent way for the second world war. He did not deny that the basic assumption for the purchase of the Orion aircraft is to protect convoys which are to be used only if there is a prolonged war in continental Europe which, on behalf of my party, I assert is an absolutely absurd priority. However, the white paper on defence states that our first defence priority is to maintain Canadian sovereignty. In the words of the minister on other occasions, the Orion purchase is primarily a NATO commitment. Given the amount of capital it would take up in the next three years, I should like to ask the minister how he intends to meet the number one defence priority stated by his own government, and, specifically, how we are going to provide patrols for the protection of our fisheries or for the control of pollution?

**Mr. Richardson:** To respond to those questions in order, let me say that our major objective is to play our part in achieving international stability, and the way we do that is by helping our NATO partners to achieve a balance of military force, a balance which for 25 or 30 years has maintained a peaceful world. That is what we are trying to do, not only by acquiring long range aircraft but by re-equipping our armed forces in other ways. We are also able to meet the other objectives of carrying out surveillance of our fishing fleets and surveillance of the north at the same time.

**Mr. Broadbent:** In view of the absolute absurdity of the government's position, would the minister acknowledge that the main reason for going ahead with this deal is to live up to the government's perception of Canada's obligation to purchase more equipment from the United States because of its view of our past failure in terms of the defence provision sharing agreements—the Americans simply want us to spend a little more on the equipment they have produced.