

Supply—National Defence

Mr. Pearkes: Yes, Mr. Chairman, efforts have been made over many years to standardize the various types of equipment which are used by our NATO partners. No one can claim that those efforts have been very successful. There are conflicts between the different nations, making it extremely difficult for one type of equipment to be accepted by all nations.

The type of aircraft to which the Leader of the Opposition referred was the G-91. That was an aircraft for the direct support of troops. It had a role different from that which is being given to the squadrons of the R.C.A.F. in their strike reconnaissance. It was designed for direct tactical support of ground troops.

Mr. Pearson: Perhaps this is a matter of semantics, but this plane is always referred to as a strike fighter. We talk about the present F-104 as a strike fighter and reconnaissance plane. I take it then that the roles of these two planes are quite different in the NATO organization?

Mr. Pearkes: That is my understanding. They have two different roles.

Mr. Pearson: In order to confirm the statement I made earlier I wish to say this. When the minister said we should not ask him whether the chiefs of staff recommended this or that, or whether they made recommendations, I recall that on February 23, 1959, in discussing the CF-105 the Prime Minister quoted the advice of the chiefs of staff and their view that this aircraft to all intents would be obsolete by the time it became available for squadron services as the reason for the government making the decision it did.

Mr. Pearkes: If the Prime Minister thinks it is advisable in certain particular cases to make such a statement, that is his prerogative.

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of National Defence, in commenting on my remarks last night, has reflected on my motives and my integrity in putting them forward. I attempted to raise a question of privilege, but without success. I state now categorically that I have no motive whatsoever in putting them forward except to see that Canadian taxpayers shall get the best value for their dollars, and that if R.C.A.F. airmen are going to be stationed in Europe to help protect us in a hostile world they shall have the best possible equipment available.

The minister started his rebuttal by saying that all the information was at his disposal, and that he had a committee of experts of the Royal Canadian Air Force who had been

working for months on the problem of selecting a new plane to re-equip the air division. He later went on to list some of the major choices among the 20 that were evaluated by the Royal Canadian Air Force. Yet when we asked him this morning how many hours each of these planes was flown by R.C.A.F. pilots he is not able to give that information off the cuff and does not have it in the records before him.

I wonder whether he has any other information on the evaluation which he can give us. Surely there is something not classified that he can tell the committee which at least would be partially reassuring to us. He told us that early this year it became clear what role the R.C.A.F. air division would be called upon to play, and apparently at that time the R.C.A.F. experts were able to weed out from the long list of planes they had been examining all those which were not designed or fitted for the strike reconnaissance role, and from that time forward all they had to do was concentrate on those planes which were particularly suited, through design or modification, as strike reconnaissance aircraft.

He told us that the chief of the air staff was kept fully informed by the evaluation teams. We are sure that is the case, and we would expect that the minister would be kept fully informed by the chief of the air staff. What we have not received any assurance on whatsoever is that either the advice of the chief of the air staff or the advice of the minister was taken by the government.

He told us that the R.C.A.F. evaluation was based on purely military and operational grounds, as of course it would be, and that a recommendation was finally made to cabinet defence committee. But, of course, that is classified information. We cannot find out what was the recommendation of the chiefs of staff committee. We have no indication whatsoever whether it was the first priority, second, third, fifth or sixth. Finally the minister told us that recommendations were made by the cabinet defence committee to the cabinet. Perhaps the minister would tell the committee if it is true that the decision was just made on Wednesday, the day before this debate began, or whether it was taken earlier.

We are informed that the Department of Defence Production went into the details of production, cost sharing, etc. When Right Hon. C. D. Howe was minister of defence production he always took the view that when the Royal Canadian Air Force or the Department of National Defence set the specifications for the equipment they required and told defence production which piece of