

*Abandonment of Defence Projects*

of the people at home that they are the most ineffective government which Canada has seen since confederation.

The most recent announcement made by the minister with regard to the frigate program constituted a shattering blow to the senior service in Canada, a service which has a remarkable record both in war and in peace. Yet this shattering blow was dealt to the Royal Canadian Navy without any suggestion of an alternative being put forward so that the service could keep going. Now we find all the men in the Royal Canadian Navy considering, and rightly, that this government is washing its hands of the service and intends to scuttle it. Everyone in the navy knows that the present ships are rapidly becoming obsolete and that new ones need to be provided. I expect most members of this house know that a shipbuilding program cannot be completed in one year or in two years—it has to be a continuous process lasting over a number of years and a start has to be made immediately, before present vessels go out of service. The pride of Canada, the Canadian navy, has been shattered by the Minister of National Defence, working in accordance with the plans of the Prime Minister and the government to reduce the effectiveness of our armed forces.

The effect of the blow which is being struck at the morale of the navy will be hard to calculate. As anyone who has had experience of the services knows, morale is a factor of the highest importance. If morale is high, people can sometimes manage with equipment which is not the best; but if morale is damaged the whole organization suffers. I think it was a terrible thing for the minister, acting of course with the approval of the Prime Minister, to announce in the house the cancellation of the program the other day without having consulted the defence committee, without even asking the committee for its advice. A preliminary statement appeared in the press and then an announcement was made in the house in order to satisfy our demands with regard to the authority of parliament. We spend all these hours in the defence committee discussing these very matters, and then we find our feet cut right out from under us. What a waste of time it is. We are discussing whether to put our money into one thing, or into another, and here the minister has decided: "This is it." We might as well disband the committee. When I asked the hon. gentleman if he wanted advice on the frigate program, he said it was not necessary.

What does this committee sit for? This is certainly a derogation of the functions of parliament—a refusal to let us determine some

[Mr. Churchill.]

of these issues. Yet that was the purpose for which the committee was set up. Statement after statement was made by the Prime Minister to the effect that the committee was to assist in the solution of this great problem facing Canada, namely what our defence policy should be. We want to assist. We have been attending meeting after meeting. Yet our assistance has been refused by the Minister of National Defence.

I do not intend to discuss the work of the committee in any detail, but if it has served no other purpose it has, in the course of its deliberations, learned the truth with regard to the Arrow program, and this has more than repaid us for all the hours we have spent in that committee. Now we have it clearly set out that in 1957 the government of that day was prepared and determined to cancel the Arrow program, but they deferred taking action because there was an election.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Falsified the position completely.

**Mr. Churchill:** When we tried to find some method of dealing with this problem we were accused of having sabotaged the defence program, of having destroyed the Royal Canadian Air Force and of having ruined the air industry in Canada. Now we know the facts. Now we have the statement by General Foulkes detailing the advice which was given to the former administration in 1957, and the fact that they deferred taking a decision to cancel the program because there was an election coming up and they did not want the people to have the truth.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Would the hon. gentleman let me ask him a question? Has he just told us that a decision had been made in 1957 to cancel the Arrow program but that it took his government until February, 1959, to carry out a decision which had already been made.

**Mr. Churchill:** We did not look back at the secret conclusions of the cabinet. When we took office in 1957, the prime minister said we would not look back at the conclusions of the earlier administration but follow the well established practice of parliamentary government, by putting aside those conclusions. My right hon. friend said we would make our own decisions and go ahead. But the situation has changed. There has been a great search, in 1963, of the secret deliberations and conclusions of the cabinet of the previous six years in order to find something which has never been found and which cannot be located. How many hours of searching was done by the Secretary of State (Mr. Pickersgill) or by Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin) in an effort to produce the document they hoped to find within those secret records?