

*Supply—National Defence*

can be used as targets for our craft to train upon. We are continually carrying out exercises with the Royal Navy, the navy of the United States and other SACLANT powers in the Atlantic, in the Pacific, in the Mediterranean and in the Carribbean and an intensified effort is being made to have our equipment and our personnel brought up to the highest possible state. In addition to that our defence research board has naval anti-submarine stations established, and there is a tremendous effort being made by the defence scientists in order to improve our means of detection.

**Mr. Hellyer:** Could the minister give us any indication of what the useful life of our destroyer escorts might be?

**Mr. Pearkes:** It is usually estimated that 20 years is the life of a naval vessel.

**Mr. Hellyer:** Twenty years is the normal life of a naval vessel. In view of the rapid development of the trend there seems to be toward submarines and anti-submarine submarines has the minister any estimate of the number of years it will be before these destroyer escorts will become obsolescent as submarine destroyers?

**Mr. Pearkes:** Of course, the means of detecting and destroying the submarine which are carried on these destroyer escorts can be changed as new inventions and new technological information becomes available. There is no reason at all why it should be considered that the weapons or the means of detection remain static. The ship itself should have a life of approximately 20 years, but even if new means of powering the ship were introduced, it does not mean that the whole ship becomes obsolescent, because those changes can be introduced if necessary.

**Mr. Hellyer:** Has the minister given active consideration to the possibility of the Canadian navy acquiring anti-submarine submarines at some time in the future?

**Mr. Pearkes:** I have mentioned in the house, I think, before that we have teams of naval experts and scientists who have been, and still are, investigating the developments which are taking place in submarine construction both in the United Kingdom and in the United States. I am not in a position at the present time to make the statement that we are or are not going to go into the anti-submarine submarine role. We have to gain a great deal more experience before we can venture into such a role. I do not want to be stampeded into doing that just in order that we may have what has been referred to as a prestige weapon.

[Mr. Pearkes.]

It has not yet been proven that the submarine is the best answer to the submarine, because the range of the weapon carried by the submarine does not reach anything like the same distance as the detection devices on the submarine. Until there is an improvement along those lines it would be unwise for Canada to commit herself one way or the other.

**Mr. Hellyer:** Can the minister give the house any approximation of when the British will launch their first atomic powered submarine?

**Mr. Pearkes:** I cannot give any information about another country. They are not included in these estimates. We are providing no money to assist the British to build submarines.

**Mr. Hellyer:** Can the minister tell the committee how many Wrens we have in the naval service at the present time?

**Mr. Pearkes:** We have 25 Wren officers and 113 other ranks. There are 55 women in the medical branch, making a total of 80 officers and 113 other rank Wrens.

**Mr. Hellyer:** Has there been any extension or contraction in the number of trades filled by the Wrens and the nursing sisters?

**Mr. Pearkes:** There has been no material increase in the number of Wrens over the last few years?

**Mr. Hellyer:** Not the number of personnel, the number of trades which they fill. I want to know the number of functions.

**Mr. Pearkes:** There has been no material change.

**Mr. Herridge:** Mr. Chairman, I was interested in the minister's statement as to the number of commissioned officers in the Wrens and the number of other ranks. Could he explain why there is such a large proportion of commissioned officers?

**Mr. Pearkes:** All the medical personnel in the Wrens are commissioned officers. They are nursing sisters, and nursing sisters are commissioned.

**Mr. Hellyer:** Recently there were some changes announced in the training policy of the Royal Canadian Navy. I wonder if the minister would be good enough to elaborate on the announcement?

**Mr. Pearkes:** The changes were introduced in order to have a general service in all ranks of the navy. Instead of having certain classified officers, such as an engineer officer, whose opportunities for promotion were very limited, they now all go in on a general list. The same principles apply to the seamen in