

Alleged Lack of Government Leadership

agreement. We were on January 25th and January 31st. My views have not changed. Between then and Sunday you must have changed yours.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that if you read the two letters together, as I have put these two paragraphs on record, what you clearly have is a decision by this government to acquire nuclear weapons for Canadian forces. The only difference between the former minister of national defence and the Prime Minister is that the Prime Minister wants to take a little time before he makes that specific and clear statement, as the former minister apparently wanted him to do. It is of no consequence whatsoever whether nuclear weapons are accepted now or three months from now because everyone in the house, including the Prime Minister, well knows that the NATO council meeting next May is not going to decide on NATO nuclear forces. Everyone knows that President de Gaulle of France and several other obstacles have to be removed before the policy President Kennedy has talked about can become at all practical, and that is not likely to happen for a good long time.

I submit that on this issue of nuclear weapons, as on every other issue we have had any experience with, the government—the Conservatives—and the Liberals hold exactly the same policy and make exactly the same proposals to Canada.

I repeat again that this issue of nuclear weapons for Canada, the role Canada will play in international affairs; the role we are playing in NATO as a leading smaller country trying to get some sense into the international cauldron; the role which we can play in drawing around us the uncommitted nations of the world and thereby bring some real pressure to bear on the United States and the Soviet union for a sane policy towards peace; the role which we, as a country that does not have an imperialist background and history, the role which we can play in holding the confidence of all the new nations and developing nations of Africa, Asia and South America; all these constitute the major issue before this parliament and this country.

My sadness, which I have expressed on previous occasions in the house derives from the fact that this question of nuclear weapons, like other pressing issues, gets such cavalier treatment from men of responsibility from one side of the house as well as from the other, from the fact that we are satisfied with making debating points against each other instead of seriously considering a question involving life and death for mankind the world over.

I submit that if this parliament this evening, in its last hours or days, can serve the

purpose of declaring itself determined to follow an independent foreign policy for this country, of declaring itself determined to speak its mind no matter whether our friends agree with us or not, of declaring itself determined to lead a crusade, and nothing less, across this world against the threat of a nuclear holocaust; if this parliament in the last few hours or few days of its existence had the courage and vision to do that, it would accomplish more than it could possibly have accomplished trying to deal in the generalities the amendment and the sub-amendment have suggested.

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis), who has just preceded me, in an eloquent speech has dealt very boldly with the subject which was uppermost in the minds of the people today. It is rather surprising that this subject was avoided by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Pearson) when he had his great opportunity in this session to deal with a subject of major interest.

An hon. Member: He was chicken.

Mr. Churchill: Last week when we were dealing with the business of the house I suggested that the topic he wished to discuss on that occasion might be better dealt with on Monday and Tuesday of this week, when it would be possible to move a motion and reach a conclusion with regard to a very important subject. The Leader of the Opposition on that occasion dodged, as he so frequently does, that issue and although the opportunity came again today, he avoided the issue.

An hon. Member: He hasn't had his orders yet.

Mr. Churchill: The motion that is put before us on this supply motion is one of those omnibus motions which run contrary to the rules which should be applied—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Churchill:—on a supply motion, but it has been allowed and consequently we have several subjects before us for discussion. I intend to deal with that portion of the speech of the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Social Credit party which dealt with the allegation of confusion and indecision; the allegation of the failure to organize the business of the house, the failure to outline a positive program of follow-up action, and things of that nature.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): What about defence policy?