

*Refitting of HMCS "Bonaventure"*

the refit of the *Bonaventure*. It did not need to be refitted; it would not have sunk with an additional three years' service. What does it mean to the Canadian people when the minister makes such a statement? Does it assure them that the same situation will not occur in the future?

The President of the Treasury Board did not say anything. It was interesting to watch his officials in the gallery. They were amused. I am not sure what they were amused about. They may have been very pleased with the speech they had written for the minister, they may have thought he was doing very well, or perhaps they were laughing at Parliament or its members. Then again, though I do not suggest this very seriously, they may have been laughing at the minister himself.

• (9:50 p.m.)

The minister has a responsibility for considering the average Joe who is getting damn poor results from the expenditures we are making under the tender system. The work on the West Block was another wonderful example of underruns and overruns. Every time the contractor got an underrun he put the money in his pocket, and whenever he got an overrun the government paid. We all remember the Arts Centre. The estimated cost was \$9 million. In the end it exceeded \$47 million. Expo was supposed to have cost \$40 million. In fact, it turned out to be \$300 million. Would anybody like to guess how much it will cost us to hold the 1976 Olympics that are not supposed to cost us anything. My guess is that \$50 million will be very cheap.

The Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Richardson), who is new in his department, did tell us he was giving some consideration to this problem, and I am sincerely grateful for that. People are making estimates in connection with government contracts without having the faintest notion of what they are doing. They are not competent. Every major estimate has proved to be so far out that it might as well not have been made. The minister sought to tell us we were not doing badly on the basis of 10 per cent plus cost. That may be the opinion of some people but it does not seem to me we should be counting on overruns at 10 per cent plus cost. It reminds me of the days when the country had to depend on operations of that kind. Surely that is not the case today.

This country is not getting full dollar value for the work we are contracting out. The Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans) has found this out. His tender system was so bad that

the man who already owned the trucks and operated under a contract refused to tender on it again. It seems to me that if anyone was in an advantageous position to tender, this operator should have been. He did not wish to be involved in the tender system. In my opinion the tender system is not honest, it is not competently managed and the government should come up with a new one.

The cost of refitting the *Bonaventure* was estimated at \$8 million. Then somebody came along and made an offer of \$4.5 million. There were other tenders of \$5 million and \$7.5 million. Mr. Speaker, in these circumstances the only bid worth considering was the \$7.5 million bid; otherwise one has to assume that those preparing the estimate were stupid or that the man who volunteered to do it for \$4.5 million was stupid. Nobody in his senses would grant a tender for an amount which is just half of the estimate. Today, the real facts are available. The estimate was \$8 million but the cost turned out to be \$17 million. Where does this leave a government which accepted a \$4.5 million bid?

I have seen this happen both ways. There is another facet to this question which has not been discussed. I can remember the end of the Arrow program and the decision by the Department of National Defence that it could no longer pursue this national endeavour. I know many people who were very proud of the fact that Canada had one aircraft carrier. I am also aware that there are many pilots in the air force today flying the CF-105 who realize that this plane, with a 200-mile radius, cannot go anywhere unless it has an aircraft carrier to support it. It has no value unless it is flying around in Canada close to a gas station.

Many people still do not like to see the end of "The Bonnie" The Canadian public are fairly generous and they have shown this quality on many occasions, even when they have not been asked. I am sure that if we asked them to agree to give the *Bonaventure* as a gesture, to Australia—which might be able to use it, since Australia already has a ship of the same type—they would willingly give consent. It would be a gift worth making to a sister dominion. I strongly urge the government to consider this proposal rather than letting the ship go to some art dealer in Toronto who would take it through the Seaway. The government would probably have to spend another \$50 million to widen the Seaway for that purpose.