

myself, are fed up with the incompetent political leadership that permits this to happen.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forrestall: The manipulation of professionals in the public service and the Canadian armed forces by incompetent political leaders is morally wrong. Because of actions like this the government will find itself out of office. The story of the *Bonaventure* has been a black eye, if you will, on the Canadian armed forces ever since the incident. But it is not the professionals, it is not the serving officers, it is not the five men who were directly involved and who got the axe one way or the other; much more directly it is the result of inept political leadership.

• (2100)

Perhaps even more glaring is the question of the final cost of the DDH-280 program. In 1968, estimates for this program were set at \$170 million or thereabouts. Here again, there were half a dozen different figures given. No one knows what the figure was. I could mention one as low as \$140 million. In any event, in 1966 there was a figure of \$170 million estimated to cover the total cost of those four ships. To date those ships have cost Canadian taxpayers \$282 million, and the ships are still in the river yards; they have not gone down to the Atlantic Ocean where they will serve. Worse, there is no way of getting an indication from the government of the final cost of this program. It is a simple question of how much will these four ships cost when turned over to the commander of maritime command for operational purposes, with the keys in the ignition and the supplies and crews on board?

We cannot get an answer to that question. These ships will go to Halifax. They will be finished there. Work will be necessary following sea trials. Work not finished in the river yards will have to be done at the dockyards in Halifax. While I have no doubt about the ability of the tradesmen and the professional people on the east coast to complete this work, I begin to wonder to what extent the Department of Supply and Services let the river yards off the hook with respect to the moral obligation they had to complete this program. How much have they got away with? Who knows? I doubt that anyone will ever know.

No information as to the final cost has been forthcoming from either the Department of National Defence or the Department of Supply and Services. Are they afraid to admit that not even they know what the final cost will be? Do they believe that Canadians are blind and stupid and cannot understand or accept the truth even though it may hurt a little? I say to the political leaders across the way that it is not themselves they are protecting; rather, it is the professional officers whose reputations they are damaging.

In the case of the DDH-280 we have probably the finest ship of its kind in the world. Why do we not say so? Why do we not admit that mistakes were made, that the prime contract was ill-conceived and entered into without proper consideration? Why do we not admit we have made mistakes and tell the public that we are not sure what this program will cost but that everything is being done to keep costs in line? But the government does not do this. The government prefers to procrastinate, to be evasive, to mislead, to protect its political hide at any cost.

Control of Government Expenditures

The government will never tell the Canadian public the whole story.

In this case the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Richardson) should give us some answers. As was mentioned by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), perhaps after all our experimentation with the committee system it is right here in the House, in committee of the whole, that Parliament will become effective. This is where we may learn the full answers to our questions. We shall not get them in committees which are understaffed and poorly administered with respect to timing. I think it is time we paid a little more attention to this chamber because perhaps in committee of the whole extravagant, wasteful decisions, decisions made for political purposes against the advice of professionals in the various departments, can be avoided.

I can suggest no better place to start than right here. Otherwise, there will continue to be waste to a degree which is not acceptable to the public until there is more frankness, more honesty and more concern about the work we are trying to do on behalf of Canadians.

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggart): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Skoberg: Go to it, Alf. They are spending all your taxes.

Mr. Gleave: I hope the House has carefully noted my cheering section.

An hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gleave: I think the official opposition has done well by bringing in a motion saying that the actions of the government should be more carefully scrutinized. Our approach is also one of examining expenditures to bring them properly before committees so that they can be thoroughly considered.

I wonder whether Canadians realize how many programs are carried out without examination either by the House in committee of the whole or by standing committees. For example, the government spent something in the neighbourhood of \$80 million on the Lift program simply on the basis of an estimate. This spending was not examined thoroughly. They made payments to farmers and then said to the same farmers, "All that money was not really due to you. We want some of it back." Then on occasion they changed their position and said to the same farmers, "Sorry, but we are wrong again. Do not bother to send anything back." Obviously there was poor bookkeeping here or inadequate guidelines. The method of payment was never really understood by some farmers. In many instances they did not know what the basis of payment was.

• (2110)

We were presented with a similar kind of program under the stabilization bill. As responsible members of the House sitting in committee of the whole we said we were not prepared to accept the bureaucratic approach taken by the government, and in turn we were told we were obstructing parliament. Time after time during the short while that I have been in this House, when opposition members have demanded to know how money is being spent and what effect programs are going to have on the