

*Abandonment of Defence Projects*

frigate construction program initiated by the former government. On September 17 the *Quebec Chronicle* took a look at the Associate Minister of National Defence (Mr. Cardin), and I think he should be given more prominence instead of being in the shadow of the Minister of National Defence. When the associate minister took office back in April he stated that his position was co-ordinated with that of the Minister of National Defence on an equal basis, that he should not be kept in the shadows. The *Quebec Chronicle* of September 17, under heading: "Government dodging clear stand on naval building issue", had this to say:

One would have thought that the cue given by Mr. Lowery—

—who was speaking at the meeting which was attended by the associate defence minister—

—the associate defence minister would have had an excellent opportunity to say something ex cathedra on the subject. He is presumably not a little cog in the government machinery, but a real big wheel. As associate minister he is obviously intimately aware of government policy on the subject—if, in fact, there is any policy.

Did Mr. Cardin rise to the occasion and make a clear statement? Not at all. Mr. Cardin waffled. He gave his listeners a history of the *Qu'Appelle*—

—and he failed to give any indication as to what his program was. I think the Minister of National Defence should permit the associate minister to leak some of this information out to the press from his office, as is obviously happening.

On October 1 the *Winnipeg Tribune* quotes Southam news service as follows:

Defence minister Paul Hellyer practically admitted Monday that the R.C.A.F. decision, now reversed, to use Penhold as a jet training base was made without all the facts in hand.

I am not going to deal with that particular area of decision and indecision, advance and retreat; I will leave that to others to discuss.

On October 12 the *Ottawa Journal* carried the heading: "Mr. Hellyer whittles". He is sitting in a corner somewhere, whittling away with a jackknife. This article says:

The R.C.N. sees old veterans of the destroyer fleet going into retirement with no decision made on whether there will be new all-purpose frigates or a clutch of submarines to keep the navy up to date in years to come. There is uncertainty about the future of the Bobcat armoured personnel carrier for the army now under development. The R.C.A.F. is concerned that only 25 per cent of its budget is available to buy equipment which is more complex and more expensive.

Mr. Hellyer has a responsibility to eliminate useless expenditures but he also has a duty to maintain efficient defence services for the protection of Canada and to keep faith with our allies.

And so it goes—decisions announced by way of the press, and failure to let us have a go at these things in the committee which

was set up for that specific purpose, in accordance with the instructions that this house received from the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson).

On October 9 the *Ottawa Citizen* reports the following, and the question here was with regard to the naval program. I had asked him a question and the newspaper reports this. The defence minister said:

I hope to reach a decision very soon—

I had asked whether the minister wanted a recommendation from the committee, and the minister said he did not think this would be necessary, although of course the committee had the right to do so. Well, Mr. Speaker, what can you do with a minister like this, who is advancing a program piecemeal through the press and not through parliament, or with the assistance of the defence committee?

On October 16 the *Winnipeg Tribune* quoted a Canadian Press report as follows:

The government plans to switch half the R.C.A.F. strike force to low level jet bombers in Europe to a non-nuclear role, informed sources say.

When I asked the Minister of National Defence whether something like that might be done he brushed me aside. Away back on May 30 I said the CF-104 Starfighter might be modified. I asked him whether he was aware that the Starfighter aeroplane with appropriate modifications could use a conventional bomb instead of a nuclear weapon and he gave me a profound answer from high Olympus. He started off by saying that I knew nothing about it, but that is the normal answer I get from the minister. Then he said, as reported at page 486 of *Hansard*:

It is not a good all-purpose, general weapons platform, and the particular configuration purchased by this government was designed in such a way that it is virtually useless for anything except the role that was undertaken by the previous government; and the modifications which could make it useful for some other purpose are so considerable, and the effectiveness that it would have under those circumstances would be so low, that no military adviser would ever recommend it to any government, I can assure you.

Now an informed source says that the government is planning to switch out of low level jet bombers to a non-nuclear role, which means that it will have to be modified in order to carry a non-nuclear weapon. We have seen, and are seeing, massive confusion in the Department of National Defence, and along with the other departments I have mentioned this department is creating confusion in the minds of the public and is contributing to the lowered prestige of the present government. Three times 60 days for decision, with 10 days extra, and the government have created the impression in the minds of the people abroad and in the minds