

Alleged Lack of Government Leadership

That is all that has happened. What has happened since January 1961, is that the Soviet union has shown a little bit of flexibility with regard to inspection of nuclear disarmament and that the major powers are a step nearer to the possibility of a test ban, and perhaps even disarmament of nuclear weapons.

That is what has happened since January 1961, and it should have led the Liberal party and its leader to continue in the policy that he espoused in 1961. Instead of this he has turned that policy upside down.

What reasons does he give? Does he argue that nuclear weapons in Canada would strengthen the western alliance? Does he suggest they would strengthen our deterrent force? Does he say that their acquisition would make Khrushchev and the Soviet union tremble more? No, all he says is that in his view Canada made a commitment, it should therefore now honour its commitment, and as soon as he becomes prime minister he will negotiate Canada out of the commitment it should now honour.

I respectfully submit, Mr. Speaker, that in all my life of political discussion and debate, and in all my life of reading the thoughts of other men I have seldom come across anything so irresponsible, indeed if I might use the term, so puerile—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lewis:—as to suggest to take the serious step of increasing the membership of the nuclear club, in order that the day after you have done so, you can reverse the policy and get out. What nonsense on the part of a man who aspires to become the prime minister of Canada, and who was once secretary of state for external affairs.

The reason for our position, Mr. Speaker, was also stated the other day by the secretary of defence in the United States, Mr. McNamara, as reported in the *Globe and Mail* of January 31. He is reported as having said that tactical nuclear weapons in the hands of NATO allies increase the possibility of a nuclear escalation, once these weapons are used.

These are the reasons why we oppose nuclear weapons in the hands of Canadian forces: it makes no material improvement in our defence position; it makes no material improvement in the defence position of the west. It does not, in effect, strengthen the western deterrent, but it does increase the nuclear club, increases the danger of nuclear war and increases the danger of escalation to total nuclear war if tactical nuclear weapons were used in Europe.

I say that when the state department's statement, which caused such a furore last week,

[Mr. Lewis.]

said Canada's acquisition of nuclear weapons would not increase the nuclear club, it was simply talking nonsense, unless the state department of the United States intends to have complete and exclusive control of the nuclear weapons which we place in the hands of our forces. If that were so, then we would not join the nuclear club, nor would we have any independence left. But if the Leader of the Opposition is right when he said that our finger will be on the safety catch while the United States' finger is on the trigger, then the nuclear club is increased because we would have some control over the nuclear weapons. For that reason, and other reasons, it will make our role in disarmament more difficult and this is another ground on which we oppose the acquisition of nuclear weapons for Canada.

It has been suggested in the subamendment before us, and again and again by spokesmen for the Liberals, that the government's policy is not clear. I suggest to the house, with sadness and with sorrow, that the government's policy is only too clear and that it is a policy exactly the same as the policy of the Liberal party, namely, in favour of Canada acquiring nuclear weapons. In that connection I want to put on record most of the letter which was filed this morning by the Prime Minister, the letter of resignation of the former minister of national defence. He says in the second paragraph of that letter:

During the past two weeks particularly, I have made absolutely clear what I considered the minimum position I could accept, and several times have offered to resign unless it was agreed to.

I ask hon. members to follow the next sentence carefully.

It has become quite obvious during the last few days that your views and mine as to the course we should pursue for the acquisition of nuclear weapons for our armed forces are not capable of reconciliation, thus it is with a great deal of regret that I now find I must tender my resignation as Minister of National Defence.

Thus, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member did not say that he and the Prime Minister disagreed on the question of acquisition of nuclear weapons. What he said was that he and the Prime Minister could not agree on the course which is to be pursued for the acquisition of nuclear weapons. The Prime Minister, in answering this letter of resignation, very significantly does not correct the statement by the former minister, but simply says in the final paragraph of his letter:

When I concluded my speech, you shook my hand and expressed your approval. From the position I took in the House of Commons on that day, I have not deviated. Since you approved it then, and since you later made it clear in your speech of January 31st, as reported in *Hansard* at page 3322 and following pages, that you supported my stand, I am at a loss to understand your suggestion now that your views and mine are not in