

Supply—National Defence

Mr. Langlois (Mégantic): Mr. Chairman, I have had an opportunity to look over the speech the minister made last night and I must say that in the two years since he laid the White Paper on defence before this house a lot has been done in the department and a great many changes have been made. I know that at the time these proposals were announced there was a good deal of anxiety. Many people wondered how these measures would turn out. All in all, the minister seems to have handled the situation well. With regard to the integration of the armed forces in particular, I believe the hon. gentleman and his advisers should be congratulated. This was a touchy and difficult subject because the action to be taken required changes in the status quo and in the mentality in various sectors of the armed forces which had been built up over many years. I believe the minister handled this well bearing in mind the over-all state of morale in the armed forces. We must remember that these moves cut out a great deal of unnecessary expenditure of the taxpayers' money.

A year ago I spoke on this subject when the minister's estimates were before us and I am glad to see that since then the minister has taken account of the importance of providing the Canadian armed forces with equipment which is reasonably convenient for their use. At that time we asked that our armed forces should be mobile, highly versatile and efficient so as to be able to cope with any local situation in which they might be called upon to act. I do not agree that we should always run all over the world to take part in operations of a military type whenever we are asked to do so and to send forces abroad with our eyes closed. Some criticism has been directed against the minister and the government because of the initiative shown in the past in this field. I am thinking, now, of Cyprus in particular. Sometimes, of course, these interventions are needed. But I hope the government will always act in such cases in the interests of Canada and not on the orders or say so of our neighbour to the south. I recognize that in this field they are an extremely powerful nation. We are just little dots beside them but we have a job to do and I think we can do it.

It is not my belief that we should try to compete with the other nations of the world in a nuclear race. We would be stupid if we were to try to win the race to the moon. We would be just as stupid if we tried to win the race for nuclear arms. When the hon. member for Vancouver East spoke of the Voodoos

[Mr. Winch.]

we had purchased I was inclined to agree with him. Practically 100 per cent of such purchases consisted of leftovers for which the United States could find no further use. What do we suppose we can do with obsolete equipment? If we do not possess the means to get the best equipment, then I think we have to follow another corridor, to pursue another goal.

We belong to NATO and to NORAD. I have been on NATO trips and have discussed these questions with members of the parliaments of other countries. I think the minister was with us one year. There was one Canadian parliamentarian who got up and told the members of one of the committees to stop looking back and arguing as they had been doing. They had been arguing for eight years about the same point. They were still doing it and nothing had been accomplished. They always kept saying: we do not have all the money we need; contributions are not enough to realize our plans.

● (1:30 p.m.)

I know this. But let us be careful not to follow in the footsteps of Turkey, for example. In Turkey one can walk through the ménages militaires—armories, we call them—and see the history of Turkey written on the walls. Account is taken of all the wars they have had for a thousand years. They are proud of that. A visitor can go through these armouries and find the history of Turkey there. I believe that ever since that country has been a nation they have been fighting. But today they are poor as church mice. If that country had spent 10 per cent of its national defence budget on fighting poverty in their country they would today have a country which would attract tourists from all over the world. That is one side of the story. When they have nobody to fight they fight among themselves. It is all right to be able to defend oneself. That is a moral obligation of the government, but it is also its moral obligation not to go beyond its means and the means of the Canadian people. We have other ways in which we can help maintain peace in the world. The greatest example of this was when Pope Paul VI went to the United Nations not so long ago. We have a defence minister by the name of Paul. If he would just follow the other Paul's footsteps sometimes at least, I think I would agree with him.

The thing is that we do not have in this country the means and the money to build up our forces' equipment as is done by our neighbour to the south, by England, by the