

Refitting of HMCS "Bonaventure"

the last contract be returned to the government. This is a small amount, but it indicates the slipshod method by which contracts are let.

The committee then examined the cabins in detail and found excessive charges for repairs made to them. Sheets were drawn up by the department and given to the Public Accounts Committee showing why certain repairs were made to furniture in the cabins. Different reasons were given by various witnesses, but finally we were told that the sheets did not mean much—

• (4:50 p.m.)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Carry on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous agreement for the hon. member to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Harding: Thank you, Your Honour, and I thank hon. members of the House. I will not impose too much upon their generosity. Before concluding, I wish to make one or two points about the furniture repairs. In my opinion, they were excessive. Also, this matter involved some poorly drawn contracts and despite the assurances that have been made, I suggest the public interest was not being watched. On examining the matter further we found that there were verbal agreements that certain repairs had to be done. Certain conditions were set down on sheets, but we were told there was an understanding that repairs over and above those specified on the sheets would need to be carried out in the cabins. If that is an example of the type of estimating that has been going on in this particular department, I say something ought to be done. Members of the House should insist that action be taken to correct this situation.

Before sitting down I wish to make one more point. I know other hon. members wish to take part in this debate. It is not only the matter of the *Bonaventure* that upsets me and other members of the House. Anyone examining the report of the Auditor General, and I have attended numerous meetings of the committee, will find listed department after department and item after item in which there has been gross over-estimating of

[Mr. Harding.]

costs. Goods have been bought before the department has examined them. I am thinking of a case in which a number of buses were bought from a newly established company which was manufacturing them for the first time. The result was terrifically heavy repair costs for the government. How in the world any department could accept delivery of a number of buses that it had not inspected properly is beyond me. That is the type of business administration we deplore. It must be corrected.

I also wanted to speak about the fire which took place on the hydrofoil. The failure to set up proper and adequate fire protection systems on the vessel resulted in the loss to the Canadian taxpayer of many millions of dollars. Consider, also, Expo 67. There, the public purse was not as well protected against many of the expenditures made as it might have been. If certain steps had been taken at the proper time, certain sums of money could have been recaptured for the public purse. The Auditor General's report deals with item after item after item coming under a number of departments.

In concluding, I sincerely urge the government to adopt many of the Glassco Commission recommendations which have not yet been adopted. We ought to go much farther in that direction in order to make certain that the people of this nation obtain as full a return as possible for public money spent. I am convinced that ministers of the government responsible for the over-all programs of government spending will need to insist on a far greater degree of efficiency than the report of the Public Accounts Committee and other information coming forward to members of the House during the present session has shown to exist at this time. May I thank hon. members for their indulgence in allowing me to speak for a few minutes longer.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, the motion under consideration reads in part as follows:

That the government—

—and I would add that none of the governments which followed one another protected the Canadian people. I continue reading the motion:

—the taxpayers of Canada from waste, extravagance and other abuses in the spending of government money and for these failures the government deserves the condemnation of the House.