

Supply—National Defence

Later, Mr. Chairman, it says:

A pair of F-104's was ferried to Edwards. First on the agenda was a flight and landing demonstration by company pilots.

Grumman was first. The F-11F dropped down in typical carrier-landing fashion. The fighter stopped in an impressively short distance. But a wheel locked and a tire blew in the process, taking the edge off the performance.

And Lou Schalk did even better with the Starfighter. He made a gentle landing, not even using the drag chute, and pulled up neatly with a 455-foot shorter roll.

Then Col. Albert Werner flew the F-104; Maj. Walter Krupinski the F-11F. Object was to race to 50,000 feet.

Col. Werner took the F-104 to 35,000, accelerated to 1122 mph, and nosed up to 50,000 feet. He completed his mission—

The Deputy Chairman: Order. I am sorry to advise the hon. member that his time has expired. Shall the item carry?

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the minister just one or two questions. The first is as to whether this particular plane, the F-104G, was recommended to him by these technical and military advisers as the plane most suitable for discharging the new role of the air division in Europe? Perhaps the minister would deal with that question first.

Mr. Pearkes: I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition gave the answer this morning when he said that it was not the policy of the government to express or to declare anything about the advice they receive from their military or civilian chiefs.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, I said that that principle which the minister has enunciated is a reasonable one, but I also pointed out to the minister that when we were dealing with a situation which is partly responsible for the position we face today the Prime Minister gave a decision made by the government based on technical information which he had received from the chiefs of staff as justification for that decision. Therefore I thought it quite fitting in similar circumstances to ask the minister whether the technical and military advisers of the government—I am not mentioning them by name or position—had recommended this plane as the most suitable to the minister for the function which it was to perform. If the minister cannot answer that question, and certainly the Prime Minister answered it or volunteered an answer to it, would the minister tell us whether he has recommended this plane to the cabinet as the most suitable plane for the role in which it is to function?

Mr. Pearkes: The cabinet was given all the information possible regarding this and other planes, and in view of the information

[Mr. Hellyer.]

that they received the cabinet made the decision to re-equip the air division with this aircraft.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, the minister made quite a point this morning out of the fact that the plane he suggested we were talking about, the F-104, was not the same as the plane which has been accepted by the government for re-equipping the air division, the F-104G. He gave the impression that the F-104G is a different type of plane, that something had been done to it which made it more suitable to discharge its function than the F-104, and that our criticisms of the F-104 and the criticisms we levelled generally were based on the F-104 and did not apply to the F-104G. This is a very important point because if in fact the F-104G is something new and was tested as such—that is to say, as an F-104G—surely the committee should know what are the changes which have removed the disability under which the earlier version, the F-104, operated. Perhaps the minister could tell us what these changes are to the F-104G which have made it a more suitable plane for the purposes we have in mind?

Mr. Pearkes: There have been very material changes made in the F-104 as originally designed, developed and produced. In the new version of the F-104, which is the F-104G, those technical changes were made in order to make this plane capable of flying at high speed at low altitude, and to provide additional safety to the pilot flying this aircraft at low altitudes.

Mr. Pearson: When the minister said, as he did this morning, that this plane along with others was tested by R.C.A.F. and other Canadian pilots before the decision was made, can he give the committee an assurance that it is the most modern version of the plane, the F-104G, which was actually flown and tested by Canadian pilots with the changes which he has just mentioned?

Mr. Pearkes: No. The R.C.A.F. pilots who flew the F-104 were flying an earlier version of the F-104 than the G. The G is the modified version that can carry out the low flight role which is required of it by the air division.

Mr. Pearson: Is the committee to understand that the model F-104G which is the version of the plane considered suitable for the role which is now to be entrusted to the Canadian air division has not been flown or tested by Canadian pilots?

Mr. Pearkes: That is correct. It has not been flown by Canadian pilots.