

Refitting of HMCS "Bonaventure"

estimated ship operating costs for the 16-month refit period when she was not operating, which would more than offset the indirect costs attributed in the table.

I appreciate the need for committee examination of public expenditures. I share the concern of the committee over procedures. We keep these under continuous review with the object of incorporating improvements which experience reveals to be desirable. I think it is fair to say that the energy demonstrated by the committee in this particular case will undoubtedly result in closer scrutiny of refit operations in the future, indeed of all government procurement operations.

In closing, may I repeat my statement that I hope we will not again see the naming of specific members of the public service or members of the armed forces as was done in this particular case. After all, the minister responsible, on whose behalf I am speaking tonight, takes full responsibility for those officers and I give my support for the efforts that they made, using their best judgment in the circumstances, in making this refit. As I say, I hope such naming will not occur again in the committee's work.

Hon. D. S. Harkness (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, I came into the chamber after the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) had commenced to read this well prepared speech made up for him by someone, I think I probably know who. Thus, I am not in a position to comment upon it from its beginning. In any event, I have not risen tonight to deal with the bits and pieces of the *Bonaventure* affair or of any of the other numerous instances brought to the attention of the House of Commons by the Auditor General of extravagance, of wasteful expenditure, of bad administration and so on during the past several years. As a matter of fact, I think what is involved here is a much more important question of principle, namely the principle of ministerial responsibility for what goes on in any department of the government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harkness: I will come back to this point in a moment, but it is the main reason I have risen to my feet tonight and the chief subject about which I am going to speak.

I think there has been a deliberate effort on the part of the government to shift their responsibility on to members of the civil service at various levels. This is something I resent quite strongly, having myself been a

minister of three departments. When I was minister of a department I was prepared in every case to take the responsibility for anything that any of my officials did. Apparently the present government is not prepared to take that responsibility. In my view this is the real principle at issue as far as this motion is concerned.

Before I deal with this matter I should like to say that in my view the escalation in cost of the *Bonaventure* refit is very much less than the escalation in cost of a number of other projects initiated by the present government. As an ex-minister of defence, I resent to a considerable extent the fact that the general public thinks that perhaps the worst example of bad administration, of expenditure of public funds on useless purposes, has been the case of the *Bonaventure*. As a matter of fact, in the Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs Committee last year I personally insisted on going into the affairs of Expo, which is a far worse example of what I am talking about than the *Bonaventure*. In this particular case the total commitment of the federal government to begin with was \$40 million. In the Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs we were never able to find out what the final cost of Expo was, but it ended up that the federal government had to pay somewhere around \$300 million. This is an escalation that is far higher than that in the case of the *Bonaventure*, one which the Canadian people should keep in mind.

Then there is the case of the Arts Centre. I recall quite well when this project was first presented to the House of Commons that it was supposed to cost in the neighbourhood of \$9 million. Then when all the estimates, and so on, came in the government said it was going to cost \$18 million. It ended up costing \$45 to \$50 million, an escalation of five times or more. One of the examples that hurts me most is that of the hydrofoil. When I was Minister of National Defence I was very loath indeed to authorize a start on the experimentation and construction of the hydrofoil, and did so only after I had been assured that the cost would not exceed, under any circumstances, \$11 million to \$12 million. That was to be the absolute maximum. The cost has now risen to some \$50 million odd. The only conclusion I can draw is that the present government has been extremely lax in seeing that the people's money is spent in a reasonable way. The people responsible for this are not the deputy ministers and the various other people down the line. The people responsible are those who sit on the treasury