

Supply—National Defence

Obviously, the problem here is to know if we have in fact achieved, since the publication of the white paper in 1964, the progress we had expected. I think, Mr. Chairman, that this progress has been not only achieved but that the ambition shown at the start was even surpassed and now we are in a position to conceive the logical sequence of this preliminary stage which is called integration and which will be completed by unification of the forces.

This morning the member for Vancouver South (Mr. Winch) asked us to define the policy of the department. We did that in 1964. This policy is, I believe, stated quite clearly in the white paper and shows both the short-term and the long term policy of the Department and of the government.

If the members would read once again the white paper, I believe they would find a definition of the principle behind all the subsequent steps taken to bring about first the integration then the unification already discussed in 1964.

Although he seems sympathetic, the member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson) says to us: we want faster action.

Is this possible? Those services, while having to redefine themselves, have been able to integrate in a single command and reform in depth. This was done swiftly and could not proceed any faster.

We overcame difficulties and confusion, and we can now conceive a coherent general staff where people of the various services can work toward the same goal, because they have understood the interests, needs and advantages, and they can now fully co-operate to the building of a single force which will make Canada a forerunner in this field.

Our foreign responsibilities have not been ignored either. We explained in the white paper that until further notice, so far as the defence department was concerned, we must respect our commitments taken within the alliances to which we belong. We understood our role and we go along with the policy of this government and I believe that overseas, precisely in the carrying out of these various tasks, the Canadian forces are our country's best ambassadors whether in Cyprus, in Germany or in that operation to which we are involved in Zambia. They are the uniformed emissaries of Canada, ideal ambassadors for our cause.

Thus we exert the influence the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) wishes we

had, that is the influence of a peaceable country which knows how to implement war operations while practising international charity and which knows how to act as a peacemaker, such as in the case of Zambia where it is acting as a go-between in order to prevent the development of a more serious situation.

I do not intend to deal with all the problems that have been raised. I know that the Minister of National Defence is far more competent than I am to answer these objections, and he will do so at the proper time. However, it seems to me that there have been many contradictions among opposition members since the beginning of this debate. For instance, we are blamed on the one hand—by the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Harkness), I believe—for the purchase of this aircraft called the CF-5. We are told that this plane has been rejected by the American forces after their experiments in Viet Nam, that no country in the world will buy it and that, as a result, Canada will find itself in the position of having in its possession a specimen or unique samples, that it will complicate in a fantastic manner the costs involved for unkeep, maintenance, and operation of these planes.

Well, Mr. Chairman, that is not borne out by the facts. Tests were made in Viet Nam, but they have not been completed yet. Tests are being conducted now and the findings have not been announced yet. I cannot see how the hon. member for Calgary North can, on his own, come to the conclusion that the CF-5 is not a valuable aircraft, that it does not fall within our specifications and the role we had in mind for it.

On the other hand, I cannot understand either his saying that we will be the only ones to have that aircraft when we know that several hundred planes have been sold already to at least nine other countries, allies of Canada.

Something has been said also—and both hon. members for Halifax mentioned it—about the problem of housing for the armed forces. We know about that problem, we understand its importance, and we agree with both hon. members in saying that a way should be found to improve the general situation with regard to housing for the armed forces.

● (3:20 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Crouse: Would the minister permit a question at this time?