

Abandonment of Defence Projects

Mr. Speaker, that is an idea I had already expressed myself, because I feel that if Canada is unable to counter-attack and must be restricted to a purely defensive action, then we have to admit some weakness on our part. And as we are economically unable to launch an attack and it is useless to think that we could withstand one, I think that we should advocate, for Canada, an army that would hinge on certain bases, that is an extremely mobile army that would enforce law and order in this country and that would also be available to assist United Nations forces.

I think that the United Nations is perhaps the place where Canada can play her greatest part, and that part will be even greater if it is really devoted to peacemaking.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that the importance of military matters will decrease in years to come and that the present conflict is to be waged on the economic plane rather than on the battlefield that is precisely the competition of an economic nature which was launched 30 years ago by the communist block and which we are in the process of losing.

I believe that the future will prove it is only in that field we can really effectively fight, for if we have to provide a defence against an attack, would it not be more sensible to eliminate the causes which could justify this prospective attack?

If we refer to the origin of all the wars in history, we realize they always resulted from an economic weakness and also from somebody's wish to subjugate another nation.

I believe that in the present context of war, the will to subjugate another nation has lost some of its attractions. Today, it is especially the question of a higher standard of living which we consider. It is especially on that ground that we should consider our future policy.

In my opinion, when the committee publishes its report, such report shall obtain the support of the whole population, since I am more and more convinced that unanimity is making progress among the members of the house on the part Canada should play, that is the part of a peacemaker devoted to maintaining peace through the United Nations.

Mr. Speaker, other members of the house will probably follow me in this debate. I know that the future has certainly surprises in store for us. I know also that it is difficult to foresee in which way military weapons will develop in future. It is as if the government was placing money in quicksand for what it decides to do today, in the light of the available knowledge, may soon become entirely useless. In fact, this item concerning frigates substantiates that fact.

It may well be that the government, which had decided to put forward that frigate program, had first hand information. But unfortunately, I find that the military men who are supposed to have been the government's advisers in the matter are the same who are telling us today that the program is useless and will not serve the intended purpose.

Therefore, I believe we ought to wait for the committee's report so that the government can find out exactly what is the general opinion of the committee, which is made up of members from all parties. As a matter of fact, I even think that the tabling of that document in the house will give everybody an opportunity to take part in a debate which could, in my view, be of benefit to all.

Mr. Real Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I shall take the opportunity which this debate affords me to make a few comments on the non-confidence motion or, if you prefer, the amendment put forward by our Conservative friends. In proposing the amendment, the hon. member said:

[Text]

That all the words after "that" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"This house regrets the widespread confusion, unrest and damage caused by the government's piecemeal pronouncements concerning abandonment of defence projects such as, in particular,

1) the cancellation of the general purpose frigate program,

2) the cancellation of the conversion of R.C.A.F. station Penhold for jet training, and

3) the contemplated abandonment of other defence establishments, and deplores that such steps have been and are being taken without seeking the views of or awaiting recommendations from the special committee on defence."

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, last year, just about the same non-confidence motion could have been put, although against the Conservative government of the day.

As far as defence is concerned, if the government cancels the frigate program or intends to cut down expenditures in the various services of the national defence department, I think it is due to certain suggestions made more than a year ago while the Conservatives were in power when we were made aware, for instance, of the Glassco report which clearly pointed out that tremendous and fantastic amounts of money were ill spent for armaments or defence projects which would never be used.

Today, the Conservatives are censuring the policies which they advocated themselves last year, two years ago and even five years ago.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time those reductions are announced, we are told about the setting up of new nuclear bases in various sections of our country and more particularly, as far as we are concerned, in the province of