

Supply—National Defence

The Deputy Chairman: Shall vote 645 carry?

Mr. Hellyer: No, Mr. Chairman. I wonder if the minister would tell the committee whether or not, in his opinion, Canada is well defended by the Bomarc base at North Bay in its present state of readiness?

Mr. Harkness: Once more, Mr. Chairman, that has nothing to do with the vote under consideration. The hon. gentleman is merely trying to make a little trouble by asking questions of this kind.

Mr. Hellyer: Would the minister state his opinion in respect of the CF-101 and say if it would be a more effective defensive weapon for NORAD if it were armed with atomic missiles? This is a straightforward, honest question. Can we not get an honest answer?

Mr. Harkness: I would cite the rule of repetition, Mr. Chairman. I have already given an answer to that question at least five or six times this session.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, in Edmonton, in giving information to a Conservative meeting, a political meeting, the Prime Minister made certain very important and specific statements. Now, we are trying to find out in this committee of the House of Commons what is meant by those statements and the minister refuses to give such information to the House of Commons. The Prime Minister has said that this change could be made in one hour or half an hour. We ask the minister to elaborate on how that can be done, if it can be done or to deny the report and say it cannot be done.

Mr. Harkness: The Prime Minister never said any such thing.

Mr. Pearson: I will put on the record what he said. This article has appeared in four or five newspapers and it has not been denied. The statement was made some weeks ago at a press conference. The article from which I am quoting is a Canadian Press dispatch appearing in the *Toronto Globe and Mail*. A reporter had asked whether or not Canada could get nuclear warheads fast enough from the United States in the event of war if Canada did not already have them, and the article states:

Mr. Diefenbaker stated he could not reply to that for security reasons. He added he had read a recent report that nuclear warheads could be made available in half an hour or an hour and indicated there was some credence in this report.

I ask the minister, in respect of this CF-104 or the Voodoo, how could that be done? I particularly ask the minister whether that could be done in the absence of a political agreement with the United States providing for joint control of these nuclear weapons,

[Mr. Hellyer.]

and I ask if that agreement could be made in an hour or half an hour?

The Deputy Chairman: Shall vote 645 carry?

Mr. Hellyer: This is a very serious matter indeed. The newspapers, who took the Prime Minister at his word, produced these articles stating that it was, in fact, physically possible to transport nuclear warheads from wherever they may be in the United States to wherever they may be required in Canada, to install them and use them within something like a period of half an hour or an hour. The minister, for the sake of clarity in this situation, should advise the committee tonight that this is, in fact, nonsense, and that it cannot be done. We would ask that the minister now clarify the situation for us.

The Deputy Chairman: Shall vote 645 carry?

Mr. Pickersgill: I should like to read this vote again. It says:

Construction or acquisition of buildings, works, land and major equipment—

This vote is for the Royal Canadian Air Force. Surely, the minister would admit that these objects about which we are talking, and for which we would be getting warheads, are major items of equipment. They have been purchased at great expense to the Canadian taxpayer and we are being asked to vote another \$31 million; yet the minister refuses to tell us what he is going to do with this major equipment, or even what could be done with it. As the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, information has been given on this matter by the Prime Minister to the privileged circles of a Progressive Conservative association meeting in Edmonton. Surely this is an odd way for the Prime Minister to be restoring the rights of parliament about which he talked so much only five years ago.

I submit to you, sir, as a point of order, that the minister should not be allowed to shelter behind this kind of silence when he is here begging us to vote \$31 million of the taxpayers' money, and yet he will not tell us how it is going to be used.

The Deputy Chairman: Shall vote 645 carry?

Mr. Hellyer: No, no, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Nielsen: I rise not to participate in the discussion that is going on but simply to make an observation. I find it very strange indeed that while our Secretary of State for External Affairs is in Geneva attending disarmament talks—