

*Abandonment of Defence Projects*

government. Almost every newspaper in Canada now is making comment which is far from complimentary to the government. I do not intend to read these newspaper comments, not even the one which was in the *Toronto Star* on Saturday last; but when a paper as close to the Liberal party as the *Toronto Star* has to take action of that sort, then every Canadian must re-examine the position of this government.

Let us not overlook the fact that only a few days ago one of the most serious charges I have ever heard in my time in this chamber was levelled against people on the treasury benches, to the extent that one of the senior members of the house, the hon. member for Kootenay West, said that when we can no longer respect the word of a member of the cabinet democracy in this country is on the down grade. This is indeed a very serious matter, and we have heard question after question put in this house to which evasive answers have been given, and to which a few misleading answers have been given.

Members of the house have been rising on questions of privilege to draw attention to these misleading statements. Only today we listened to a question of privilege respecting a misleading statement by the Postmaster General, disclosing an attitude toward the veterans of this country which does not rebound to the credit of the government.

When one enters upon a subject such as this it is rather difficult to select a specific area on which to dwell, because the areas of indecision, hesitation and spinelessness are so many. Which department should one deal with? Is it the Department of Finance? Could anybody stand another rehearsal of the ineptitude and mistakes of that department? What about the Department of National Health and Welfare? Do we want to have a look at that? The department of the Postmaster General is gradually disclosing itself as one of the least well administered departments of the government, and the Department of Agriculture is being served by a minister in absentia, so it is very difficult to get any conclusive answers with regard to the problems that confront agriculture.

The Department of National Defence looks like a suitable area to which to draw a little attention, the department whose motto now reads "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow". This is the department from which we were to get decisions, but six months have gone by, 190 days—that is three times 60 days plus 10—full of indecision and inability to cope with the problems, and the hopes of the people of Canada have been frustrated.

Back in March the Prime Minister wrote a letter to Canadian servicemen to bring them up to date prior to the election. I quote from the *Winnipeg Tribune* of March 26 what he said in his letter:

Efficient and stable government at home is a first requirement.

I think it is. This is what we want, but it is not what we have been getting. He also said:

We must regain it to rebuild confidence to bring about sound administration of the nation's business, to end deficits and promote steady economic expansion with full employment.

Then he went on to say:

The Liberal party will take decisive action to meet these goals. It has no illusion that the task will be easy.

It has fewer illusions now.

It means hard work for all of us.

Are these the men who were going to do the hard work and make the decisions? Then he ends by saying:

The time has come for action and decision with a new Liberal government.

Now 190 days have gone by, and where is the action and the decision? Well, the Prime Minister made some impression on some people in the country, and the *Ottawa Citizen* on March 27 dealt with this on the question of defence:

There is not the slightest doubt now about how a new Liberal government will proceed on the tangled and emotionally charged question of defence. As soon as parliament meets—and that will be on May 16—a Pearson government "will act vigorously, decisively and responsibly" to end the defence muddle.

Then it went on to say:

It will refer the long range question of Canada's defence role to an all party defence committee of the Commons.

Those were bold words forecasting decisive action, but 190 days have gone by and the decisive action by the minister of defence and his department has been the scuttling of the Royal Canadian Navy.

What other decisions have we had in this 190 days? Let me give some examples of what has been going on. Going back to July 2 there was a report in the *Winnipeg Tribune* headed "Ottawa won't wait for defence views."

Defence minister Paul Hellyer said today the government intends to make a decision on the navy's \$300 million shipbuilding program without awaiting the views of the Commons defence committee. He said the review of the eight ship program would be carried on and the decision would be made within a few weeks.

We had been led to believe that we would be able to play some part in helping the government make the decisions, but on July