

Mr. CARTER: Mr. Chairman, I would like to support what Mr. Winch said, by registering my disappointment that we have taken this course.

We have refrained, to some extent, in our questioning—or, at least, curtailed it—in the hope that it would be possible to have witnesses at the end of our hearings, at which time we could ask further questions.

As Mr. Winch said, if we want to get an over-all view of what our defence policy should be, certainly we want to obtain ideas from all individuals, wherever we can.

I do not think we, as laymen, are in a position to come to a mature judgment, or considered judgment, on these important matters, without getting ideas from people who have a different point of view.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH (*Calgary South*): Well, Mr. Chairman, I do not know that there is a great deal I can add.

At one time I felt there might be some advantage, when this committee was in its earlier stages, in calling any person who could offer himself as an expert witness. I think our friend, the official opposition critic, disclosed the real intention of his own party when he suggested the political parties should nominate those people to be called. Throughout his entire examination he has, I suggest, attempted to run a political campaign rather than a constructive examination in this committee.

At one point, he assessed the importance of the committee in terms that we could make a visit to NATO, and then had some difference of opinion on this later.

I suggest there is no object in this committee proceeding to call witnesses on the basis that we are not going to examine defence expenditures, but rather as he has done—attempted to make purely political hay out of the proceedings.

The CHAIRMAN: Have you a comment, Mr. Lambert?

Mr. LAMBERT: Mr. Chairman, I was rather intrigued earlier at the thought we might call witnesses. However, then came the problem whom we should call, and once you call them there arises the question of offering the privilege of rebuttal either one way or the other. It results in a never-ending discussion, and I consider it is practically impossible to be fair to everyone.

After all, the members have available the writings of a number of people who might have been suggested, and they can read their evidence.

I feel this question should not arise at this time. There is a lack of time for the calling of witnesses, and I cannot see where it would be fair, as a matter of fact, if we called former service personnel, the result of whose policies might still be in force, without giving an opportunity to present senior staff officers to expand and elaborate on the position. I just cannot see how you can have an objective appreciation to the calling of these witnesses and, as Mr. Smith indicated, I cannot go along with the suggested formula that the parties name their own witnesses, even though they do it with all the goodwill in the world. If so, I think there would be the feeling that people were advancing views on behalf of a certain political party. Certain of the witnesses who were suggested were American citizens, and we have no guarantee that any witnesses we might ask to come would be prepared to appear.

I might say there has been no restriction on the question of policy. The members of the committee have had complete and free play in this connection. I think it was one of the earlier objectives of the committee that we could go into the matter of policy right to the “nth” degree—and that is what we have done.

Mr. WINCH: Mr. Chairman, may I say that at the last steering committee meeting the question of witnesses being called as nominees of a political party was not discussed.