

Abandonment of Defence Projects

more than 1 per cent of the budget spent inefficiently in the department itself, then the Glassco report must be wrong.

Only in connection with the Honest John can we make out a case for nuclear warheads. As to the fighter planes, money spent on them is certainly not wasted. If the Prime Minister wants the country to believe he is honest, he had better explain how he arrives at this figure of a billion dollars difference between nuclear and non-nuclear defences. I suggest he can point to nothing which represents a sum anything like a billion dollars. The amendment moved by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) talks about confusion and unrest in the country. When we consider how ridiculous and inadequate is Liberal policy on defence matters it is easy to see why there should be a great deal of confusion and unrest in the country, and I trust all hon. members will be honest enough to support the amendment.

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, first of all, may I say I cannot understand the charge which has been levelled by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, that the special committee on defence is being prevented from doing its work. The Department of National Defence has co-operated in every way to the maximum extent. A precedent has been set by allowing serving officers to appear before the committee. This has not been done before in Canadian history. Similarly there has been no attempt to limit the witnesses who might be called before the committee, and a wide range of witnesses with a wide range of opinions have been called and others will be. I think this is a good idea. There has been no attempt to divert the committee from its task of calling witnesses and getting opinions in respect of all defence matters, including policy and what the future policy should be.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, as minister I gave the committee an opening statement. I have been in attendance six or seven times along with the chiefs of staff, and I have consistently offered to appear before the committee whenever requested to do so. If I have not given more witness than I have, it has been the committee's decision and not mine. Let there be no mistake about that.

The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) said that I was making decisions without having the courtesy to discuss them with the committee. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am one of those people who believes that the courtesy should be extended for me to go there and discuss them, if that is the wish of the committee, and without complaining afterwards that I have not when the opportunity was not made available. There

[Mr. Nugent.]

was a basic contradiction in the contribution of the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre this afternoon. He talked about the strictures on the committee preventing a discussion of policy, if I understood him correctly. Did I understand the hon. gentleman correctly?

Mr. Churchill: I did not put it that way at all. I dwelt on the failure of the minister to present his policies to the committee for consideration and advice before he made his decisions.

Mr. Hellyer: I understood the hon. gentleman to say, and I shall have to check the record again, that the committee was limited in its discussion, and particularly in the discussion of policy. But then he proceeded to introduce an amendment which was related entirely to hardware and housekeeping, and I found this fact not in accord with the speech he had previously made.

Surely hardware and housekeeping are not the main concern of the committee. They should, of course, use this opportunity which is available to them to acquaint themselves with the hardware and use the opportunity to study the weapons systems that are in modern use; but surely their main interest is in defence policy in the broader sense. Perhaps they have been directing their questions in the wrong way. What are the strategic considerations of future policy? I would have thought the committee would have spent a great deal of their time in trying to determine what western strategy was at the present time, what it would be in the future and whether or not it was realistic in the world in which we live—

An hon. Member: Or is there any.

Mr. Hellyer: Or is there any—and once having determined the answer to those fundamental questions and having satisfied themselves in respect of them, to evolve a policy for the Canadian contribution which would be compatible with the over-all strategy. Once that is done, once the fundamentals have been considered and decided on, then the tasks to be assigned to our armed forces and the hardware necessary to carry out those tasks follow logically from the more basic considerations.

These are the large issues to which the committee could in fact turn its attention, and I think they would be doing the house and the country a great service if they would expend their major effort in determining the strategic considerations of future policy both for the alliance as a whole and for Canada as a member of that alliance.

In the meantime progress cannot stand still. Action must be taken in respect of some