

Supply—National Defence

framework and over-all picture in order that it can carry out the attack reconnaissance plan.

The hon. member did say that the faults which had been discovered during the period of development and in the early operational stages have now been corrected. We are taking advantage of the fact that this aircraft has been proved. We are not in the position of having to pay large sums of money for the development of this aircraft, or to wait for a number of years until it has been thoroughly tested. It is a tested and proven aircraft, stable in frame and absolutely operational, sound for the role for which it is designed.

Then the hon. member referred to the fatality rate and the accident rate. In my office I heard the same figures quoted that the hon. member mentioned, and then I call attention to the fact that fatality and accident rates are never released by any government. We never release any fatality percentages or rates, nor does the United States. These were figures which were given—

Mr. Pearson: May I ask the minister whether he has read the hearings before the congressional defence committee on this particular point of fatality rates?

Mr. Pearkes: These fatality rates, as I say, are not released officially.

Mr. Hellyer: Is the minister saying that the Americans do not under any circumstances release fatality rates?

Mr. Pearkes: I am saying that the Americans do not release officially the fatality rates or accident rates as between different types of aircraft.

Mr. Hellyer: You do not release them.

Mr. Pearkes: The figures may be expressed by individual officers, but there is no official statement on that matter.

Mr. Hellyer: Pretty official from the men who fly them.

Mr. Pearkes: It may be pretty official in the hon. member's eyes. Judging by the utterly irresponsible statements the hon. member was making yesterday I think he would believe that anything which is in print is official in that regard.

Mr. Hellyer: We will see who is irresponsible.

Mr. Pearson: We will give you the rates.

Mr. Pearkes: I can say without any fear of contradiction by anybody who has the facts that the accident rate, even in the early days of the first 104, was not abnormal. You cannot

fly aircraft without having casualties; there are bound to be casualties, but it is quite wrong to suggest that this aircraft is not airworthy and has any higher accident rate than other aircraft. Therefore I repeat, the statements which were made last night were inaccurate, they were misleading and were stated without any real sense of responsibility. They are purely hearsay evidence by prejudiced personnel.

In closing, I do not think I can do better than refer to a very well-known book, which I am sure all hon. members here have read. I refer to "Pilgrim's Progress". It may be remembered that when Mr. Valiant for Truth was nearly reaching the celestial city he met three men, one of whose name was Wildhead, who approached him and endeavoured to persuade him not to proceed by telling him of the terrible dangers and difficulties which he exaggerated, and he urged him to turn back. Then you will probably recall that Mr. Valiant for Truth remarked about this adventure in these words:

Who so beset him round
With dismal stories,
Do but themselves confound.

I think the dismal stories which were advanced last night by the hon. member for Trinity have utterly confounded him in the eyes of all those who know what they are talking about.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, the minister no doubt thinks that by his quotation from "Pilgrim's Progress" he has knocked the stuffing out of our case, that perhaps some questioning in regard to this decision of the government is required. We on this side do not question the detachment or the desire of the minister to make the right decision, and we do not question his right to insist that this was the right decision and was the best plane; that the other planes were inferior and this was the right one. Therefore I should think he would want to show us the same consideration when we do question the possibility of this being the right decision. It is our duty and it is our right to criticize him, and I hope we can do so without the minister imputing motives to us of the kind he has already suggested.

We will have a good many questions to ask the minister, and by his replies he may be able to show that this is undoubtedly the best plane, the most economical plane and the best in every way; but we are going to ask him these questions and we will expect the detailed information in reply to those questions which will, at least in his view, confirm the decision he has made.

Before we begin to ask these questions of detail regarding capability, performance and