

Supply—National Defence

what the answer is. The minister is asking us to vote certain moneys. The minister is not a dictator. He may sometimes act as one, but he is not a dictator. He is a servant of the people. He is a servant of parliament. We have a right to elicit from him this information. He can sit in his seat and refuse to give it. He can look irritated. He can look offended. Those are the privileges of human beings sittings in this House of Commons. However, if he wishes to do his duty he has no right to refuse this information to parliament. If he persists in refusing to give answers to questions which have been asked by the Leader of the Opposition and by the hon. member for Trinity, then the hon. member for Trinity was justified in saying that the minister is treating this house with contempt. The minister stands in contempt of this house, and as a result he stands in contempt of the Canadian people. The minister has no other course open to him but to answer us or to say that on the grounds of strict security no responses can be given to these questions. That is not the position taken by the Prime Minister. However, if the minister says this, we shall be obliged to consider the position in which we find ourselves. However, that is not the defence that the minister offers. He simply refuses to say anything. That is the position in which we have been placed to-night as a result of this arrogant conduct on the part of this uncommunicative Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Harkness: The hon. member for Essex East has followed the course which is almost invariably followed by him in this House of Commons, namely that of misinterpreting and misrepresenting newspaper stories and so forth. He has said repeatedly that the Prime Minister has stated that we could secure nuclear warheads in half an hour.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): That is right.

Mr. Harkness: The Prime Minister said nothing of the kind. The newspaper report read by the Leader of the Opposition made that matter abundantly clear. The newspaper report read by the Leader of the Opposition started out by saying that the Prime Minister said that for reasons of security he could not state what time would be required.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Then he went on to say he gave credence to the report.

Mr. Harkness: No, he did not say that. He said there had been some reports along this line. The hon. member for Essex East by repeating time after time that the Prime Minister said we could get nuclear warheads in half an hour, has tried to convey the impression that he had said this and that these were statements of his in quotation marks in

this newspaper report, and so on; whereas the very report read by the Leader of the Opposition disproved completely the statements which the hon. member for Essex East has been making.

The Deputy Chairman: Shall vote 645 carry?

Mr. Hellyer: No, Mr. Chairman. If the minister believes, as he has told us, that the Prime Minister did not say what he is reported to have said, then in fairness to the committee he must tell us what the Prime Minister actually said.

An hon. Member: Rubbish.

Mr. Hellyer: The reason for that is quite obvious. Many newspapers from coast to coast gained the very impression which can easily be obtained by reading the newspaper report. In editorial comment in many newspapers there appears something like this. This one appeared in a paper not usually unfriendly to the present Conservative administration. I refer to the Timmins daily *Press*. It is entitled, "Thirty Minutes is Too Long", and reads as follows:

Prime Minister Diefenbaker has at last declared his government's policy on nuclear arms. And what a policy. In a speech in Edmonton at the week end he stated that if war broke out Canadian forces would be armed with nuclear weapons. So Canada will wait until an attack is launched before it even gets the means to fight back.

Asked whether the weapons would arrive fast enough from the United States in the event of war, if Canada didn't already have them, Mr. Diefenbaker said he could not reply for security reasons. He stated, however, that nuclear warheads for Canada's 65 Voodoo interceptors and Bomarc missiles could be made available in 30 minutes or an hour.

This is not a fiction that the opposition is creating, Mr. Chairman. This is an impression which is widespread in the country and which has been reported in other newspapers. Many newspapers have written editorials about it, including many which are friendly to the government. As the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate has so rightly stated, the Prime Minister has introduced a new policy and he has introduced it in the most unlikely of places, outside of the House of Commons in a speech to a Progressive Conservative association meeting in Edmonton.

We have the right to know how this policy was arrived at. We have the right to know whether it is feasible. We have the right to know by what means it may be implemented, and raises many questions which are pertinent to the vote now before us. For example, technical people who are familiar with these weapons, the F-101 and the Bomarc missile, have stated to us without