

*Supply—National Defence*

was. We had no idea and neither did the public, any more than the government did at that time, actually what our purposes and objectives were. After the election the Minister of National Defence wisely picked up the challenge, and I do not think I am amiss in saying that the recommendation for a Defence Committee first came from the members of this party.

As I say, after the election the suggestion was implemented and a Defence Committee established. This committee gave members a background of reliable, authentic information for their guidance as well as the advice of specialists who devote their time and energy to this field. It is not enough for the members of such a committee to go on occasional trips and then think about what would be a good defence policy. We want to carry on with a non-partisan attitude toward defence. That is what I think we in Canada should have. We are not a big enough country to waste our energies and our dollars pursuing some objective about which we may not know anything and which may not have any useful purpose.

There are many aspects of the defence picture which we should discuss at this time. However, we want to get on with the estimates as quickly as possible. I leave these suggestions with the minister and hope that before we reach a discussion of his next year's estimates he will endeavour to clear up some of these points which I believe are not just being raised by the members of this house but by the people of Canada. We would like to have some information.

**Mr. McCleave:** Mr. Chairman, I do not suppose there is any riding in the whole of Canada to which the military program is of more significance than it is to the riding I share with my colleague and particularly to the cities of Halifax and Dartmouth. This is so for two reasons. One is entirely economic since a large proportion of our citizens are members of the armed forces and the second is a military consideration. The area still bears the scars of its contributions to two world wars. We of the Halifax area, I may say frankly, are concerned about the policies of the present government and the policies of the Department of National Defence.

We listened to the minister last night exuding a great deal of self-satisfaction. One could almost hear him say, this is the best of all possible worlds and that he, as Minister of National Defence, had provided the best of all possible policies to look after this best of all possible worlds.

[Mr. Thompson.]

• (2:10 p.m.)

This recalls, Mr. Chairman, the famous remarks of the philosopher Pangloss in Voltaire's "Candide", who always looked upon everything with a very sunny disposition. This philosopher went forth in the world and at one point he had an ear hacked off in an encounter and in another place he had an eye poked out. Though saying that this was the best of all possible worlds these lamentable things happened to him. His teeth were lost in yet another encounter and an arm hewed off as well. Still he insisted that this was the best of all possible worlds. Finally I believe half of his rump was hacked off in yet another war and at that point he felt inclined to change his tune and retreat to his garden. I can only say, in comparing the Minister of National Defence with this philosopher, that the Minister of National Defence has more physical staying power than that philosopher and will still insist that this is the best of all possible worlds.

Yet, sir, the former minister of national defence, in a remarkably fine contribution last night, shot down this contention very quickly. He pointed out that there was a total loss of manpower of some 7,200 per year and an attrition rate of 600 personnel per month in the armed forces. He also pointed out that part of the antisubmarine might of the Canadian navy was made ineffective because ships were tied up at Halifax, Dartmouth and Esquimalt. This I can certainly vouch for.

The minister says that the effectiveness of the navy has been increased. If this is so, then under his policies he should put more ships in a mothball state. I presume that if the number able to fight effectively were cut in half, then by some curious mathematical process which the minister uses this would thereby double the effectiveness of the Royal Canadian Navy.

This obviously cannot be so and it is a matter of concern to the officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy. It is also, I imagine, a matter of concern to the minister himself because he is faced with the herculean task of bringing manpower up to the proper level.

I am critical of the minister for what he has allowed to take place. I think I and every other hon. member in the house would want to do what we can to help him overcome the results of his own follies. We should like to see the navy brought up to proper manpower strength and those mothballed ships back in action.