

Supply—National Defence

unanswered. I remember that when the minister was on this side of the house in the opposition asking specific questions about specific weaponry of the then minister of national defence he was not satisfied until he got his answers, which usually were much more rapidly forthcoming than we are experiencing this evening. Surely, to these very simple and brief questions, the minister has an answer.

Mr. Hellyer: Certainly the altitudes required for ground support are not great, and this particular airplane has an exceptional performance up to 20,000 feet, below which it can cope with practically any aircraft you can name. It can excel in most cases. It can outfly the 104, for example, in that envelope; it has very fast acceleration, supersonic dash capability, a good turning radius, and a very good capability in respect of that envelope in which the plane is operating. I think this is the specific answer to my friend's question.

Mr. Nielsen: It is, within 20,000 feet; but I do not regard 20,000 feet as ground support, to revert to the technical role of this airplane to which the minister referred. Immediately after the last war, in a similar role, I think in terms of ground support as being at much less altitude than 20,000 feet. The minister and I may have a different concept of what ground support means. This just leaves the question hanging at 20,000 feet.

Mr. Hellyer: I think my hon. friend is trying to confuse the issue.

Mr. Nielsen: Let us get along to the question, which remains unanswered, and that is the question concerning its speed.

Mr. Hellyer: It has a top speed in the vicinity of 1,000 miles an hour, which is plenty fast enough to engage any target that might come within its envelope. The flying characteristics which I outlined are such that this aircraft can stand up admirably to anything that might attack it in the altitude envelope in which it would operate.

Mr. Nielsen: I may be a year or two or more removed from the modern concept of what ground support really means, but is the minister suggesting that 1,000 miles an hour at 20,000 feet is the modern concept of what ground support must be in this new role of the air force?

Mr. Hellyer: Most certainly not, Mr. Chairman, and I am shocked at the hon. gentleman's suggesting this. Ground support [Mr. Nielsen.]

is subsonic on the deck; that is what the airplane would operate at in most cases. The advantage of having a supersonic dash capability is in case it is attacked from above by another airplane, in which case it can drop its stores and go supersonic if it wants to. That is the great advantage of this airplane over one or two others that were considered.

Mr. Nielsen: Do we understand then that the 1,000 miles per hour is the speed at which this aircraft is intended to be used in the ground support role; is that what we are to understand?

Mr. Hellyer: That is completely incorrect, Mr. Chairman, and the hon. gentleman knows it. This line of questioning just proves conclusively the suggestion I made earlier that it is futile under these circumstances to answer technical questions and that he should reserve his questions until he can put them in the Standing Committee on Defence to the air force officers who will be there.

Mr. Nielsen: I have in mind, Mr. Chairman, too that it is rather futile, because the period of almost an hour that the minister spent last evening ranging politically over the whole spectrum of defence in the bombastic way in which he did, and which has resulted in this additional questioning today and this evening, indicates to me he has no intention whatsoever of enlightening the members of this committee in respect of the questions asked yesterday and which he committed himself to answer today. There were many questions asked concerning the aircraft, and the minister did commit himself to give answers. In his own inimitable, exclusive and arrogant fashion he is simply refusing to answer the very questions he was asked to answer and which he committed himself to answer yesterday and last night.

The Chairman: Shall item 15 carry?

Mr. Forrestall: Just before we go on, Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether the minister would explain to me whether we bought the old F-5, whether we bought the F-5A, which is a slight modification of it, whether we bought the F-5A15, or whether we bought the F-5N? On the basis of the answers to these questions will rest the validity of some of the answers to questions asked this afternoon and evening, and more particularly some of the answers that the hon. member for Yukon is attempting to get.

• (8:20 p.m.)

Mr. Hellyer: We did not buy any of those models, Mr. Chairman. We bought one which