

*Abandonment of Defence Projects*

Such changes would take considerable time. We now find ourselves in the position where any report which the committee may make may be completely contradictory to the decisions the minister is currently taking.

It is said that the work of this committee will be part of the government's review of defence policy. If it is only a part, it should be consistent with the whole; and this is why I object most strongly to the fact that important decisions on defence policy are being announced before the special committee on defence has had any opportunity to study these specific matters.

It is said that the minister has confined his decisions to housekeeping matters. They are much more than that, because housekeeping matters in national defence must fit into a long term policy. If that long term policy is not yet formulated, the minister's so-called housekeeping decisions cannot be intelligently made. The Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) in that same speech in Kingston on March 26, had this to say—and the fact that time has proved him so obviously wrong in this second statement removes credence from the other one. He said on that occasion: "As soon as parliament meets we will act to bring the muddle and confusion of defence to an end. We will satisfy Canada's defence commitments to our allies." If this is bringing the muddle to an end, I would hate to see the muddle in full steam. In my opinion the Canadian people have hardly ever been more confused about the problems of defence than they are at the present time.

In addition, there is a great deal of apprehension in various parts of the country, because defence decisions have an important bearing on the economy. People are uncertain as to what the future of large defence bases in any particular area may be. My chief concern is that the announcements which have already been made do not bear the earmarks of a policy evolved by defence experts. They bear all the earmarks of pressure by treasury board, I presume, in the process of evolving the estimates of the Department of National Defence for the next fiscal year. They bear all the earmarks of a decree from treasury board instructing the department to cut expenditures at short notice.

I have sympathy for the minister in these circumstances, and I suspect this is the position in which he finds himself. It is true that we should not have a defence policy which envisages spending more money than we can afford. But that is not to say we shall get best value for our defence dollar if we make sudden cut-backs in the program or in any given situation. It was said long ago that the pen is mightier than the sword.

This situation bears the imprint of the personality of certain people who believe that a red pencil is mightier than defence philosophy. I hope the minister will stand up against these demands for a sudden cut in expenditure until a reasoned policy can be evolved and until the special committee on defence has an opportunity to record its findings. I hope he will then act on the basis of those findings and on the basis of the evidence presented to the committee, much of which has been of a high order. The government can make the decisions and be responsible for them. No one suggests that the government has to accept holus-bolus any recommendations which the defence committee may make, but I feel the committee will be able to make recommendations worthy of very careful study by the government, recommendations which will be helpful to the government in evolving a long range policy on defence matters. For this reason I think it is most unfortunate that pressure is now being placed on the Department of National Defence to save money, in an attempt to make the deficits a little smaller in the next fiscal year, before a thorough study can be given to all the effects such sudden cuts may have.

Recommendations have been made to the government already with regard to national defence. They may be considered to be minor in character in some respects—I refer to the recommendations of the royal commission on government organization, the Glassco commission. In this report, this commission made certain recommendations to the government. It recommended the closing down of only one defence establishment, the defence college in Victoria, B.C. As far as I know, no action has been taken to implement this recommendation and I do not know what action, if any, has been taken in connection with the other recommendations of this royal commission. This is one phase of defence housekeeping, as the minister calls it, where a fairly thorough study has already been made. If economies are to be effected I would suggest that the minister confine them at the present time to those suggested in the report of this royal commission.

I wish to turn now for a few moments to a subject which the minister brought up, that of submarines. This relates not only to the navy but, also, to the air force and it raises most important considerations. In our day and age there have been great changes in the concept of submarine warfare and anti-submarine warfare. With the advent of nuclear powered submarines and submarines capable of firing medium range ballistic missiles, a new threat is posed to our security,