

National Defence Act Amendment

There was a certain amount of program slippage. I think this is inevitable, but at the same time we want to use the money which is made available to us by parliament for the acquisition of equipment so that the armed forces can carry out their tasks in the manner in which we would like to see them carried out, and so that they will have the equipment they need to do the job. I hope there will be a very substantial improvement in the coming fiscal year, 1967-68, but I must say, Mr. Chairman, that no improvement would have been possible with anything like the present defence expenditure without the savings that have been made by the elimination of duplication and triplication, particularly in headquarters and in those areas that I have set out this afternoon.

Mr. Churchill: And of 23,000 personnel.

Mr. Hellyer: I think my hon. friend will appreciate that a reduction in personnel had to be made in order to make a diversion of funds for the acquisition of equipment, and that, of course, was one of the objects of the exercise.

Mr. Churchill: Unmanned ships and under-strength battalions.

Mr. Hellyer: This money is being spent for a wide variety of equipment which will give our forces balance and make them all more effective in the jobs they have been assigned. This program is well known and I will just skip over it briefly now by mentioning once again some of the more significant items.

The new support ships being acquired for the navy are really based on the model of *The Provider* which was undertaken by my hon. friend, the hon. member for Calgary North, when he was minister. Certain technical improvements are possible as a result of that experience but I think the significant thing is the increase in effectiveness of our naval force as the result of the acquisition of these three ships, and I include the one that was started then.

I have used this example a number of times and I would like to repeat it. In a study the navy did they showed that without any support ships it was only possible to maintain three destroyer escorts on station a thousand miles off Halifax on a continuous basis. With one support ship it was possible to maintain ten ships on station continuously and with two support ships it was possible to maintain the whole fleet on station continuously, or certainly for an elongated period in the event

of crisis. This is a very effective use of funds. It is an excellent example of cost effectiveness as applied to military procurement.

Four new destroyer escorts are planned and the lead items have already been contracted for. This will probably be the most effective anti-submarine system anywhere in the world, certainly that this country has ever developed, using all of the expertise and all of the knowledge which is available to us on the basis of our past experience.

One of the most significant improvements of these weapons systems over previous destroyer escorts is the introduction of the use of helicopters with a range and speed which make it possible for them to go out and survey the ocean territory by the use of listening devices which are dropped into the water, thus increasing many times over the amount of ocean area which can be surveyed for submarines.

The weapons system of a ship with an improved sonar, a variable depth sonar, which as hon. gentlemen know is a Canadian development, and the use of one or two helicopters flown from the deck, which add very greatly to the over-all effectiveness of the weapons system, has a very great capability both in surveying the ocean territory and, if necessary, in destroying submarines once they have been isolated.

Earlier this afternoon before this committee began its discussions a question was raised about the tactical airplanes that are being acquired. These tactical airplanes are for close support for our ground forces but they will do in that role all of the tasks which one would expect of them, in other words, surveillance, interdiction and close ground support. It is gratifying that the Dutch government and Dutch air force have chosen the same airplane for the Royal Dutch Air Force. It is gratifying also that these airplanes will be built in Canada based on the Canadian configuration which is a very marked improvement over the earlier configuration of this airplane.

● (5:10 p.m.)

We have placed orders for self-propelled howitzers. This, I think, is the last remaining significant equipment necessary to bring our brigade group in Europe up to full operational potential. Sufficient of these howitzers are being acquired to equip the second heavy brigade which will be stationed at Camp Gagetown and which is being used as a rotational back-up for the one in Europe. The