

Refitting of HMCS "Bonaventure"

Mr. Richardson: At the point in time when the refit was undertaken there was a plan to keep the *Bonaventure* in service for a much longer period of time. Then we had a full defence review in which expenditures were held back, and one of those was the *Bonaventure*. It is a very logical and progressive conclusion. That is the answer to the question.

Mr. Dinsdale: There is not much logic there.

Mr. Richardson: I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, that the total profit as determined under audit was under 10 per cent. In other words, the over-all profit was not unreasonable for a fixed price contract. My colleague, the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald), has spoken of officials in the Department of National Defence, and part of what he has said also applies to officials in the former department of defence production. In particular he has dealt with the committee's general conclusion No. 6, in which the committee indicated that it failed to understand why the Deputy Minister of National Defence and the Deputy Minister of Defence Production did not order an on the job investigation. My colleague has pointed out that the two deputy ministers discharged their responsibility in this respect by having the project monitored closely by an interdepartmental committee and by having a special on the spot review of the project undertaken at the time of the request for additional funds in the fall of 1966. Surely this is the answer to the charge made just a few minutes ago by the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Two other officials of the former department of defence production who are mentioned specifically in the report are Mr. R. D. Wallace and Mr. L. E. St. Laurent. Mr. St. Laurent's estimating has been criticized, but in appearances before the standing committee he has pointed out that his final estimating work was in the category of summaries and not in the itemized figures. Mr. Wallace was the division chief responsible for the contract with Davie Shipbuilding, and the committee report indicates that he misled the committee in respect to the manner in which lockers and briefing-room chairs were secured on the ship. My information is that Mr. Wallace was one of a group of officials who met with a subcommittee of the Public Accounts Committee and was present when certain explanations were advanced by officials for the cost of removing these furniture items. Mr. Wallace was not, however, the person who gave the explanation to which the committee later

objected, and subsequent testimony of other government officials before the committee clearly exonerates Mr. Wallace in this respect.

With these comments, Mr. Speaker, I wish to assure the House that I intend to continue to give most serious consideration to the matters raised by the Standing Committee and to any of the constructive observations made on both sides of the House in the debate today. As I have pointed out, some of the committee recommendations have already been implemented.

I would welcome a further opportunity either in the House or before a committee of the House to give additional information. In particular, I would be glad to provide more information on the improved procedures and cost-saving practices which have been put into effect and which are continuously being put into effect by the Department of Supply and Services.

Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland-Colchester North): Mr. Speaker, we have really been honoured in this debate as a party because we have seen three cabinet ministers participate. That is almost unique in this Parliament. But there is a reason why these three cabinet ministers have participated—it is because they are in trouble and they know it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Coates: Mr. Speaker, Hoot Gibson is over there and he is hooting, hooting, hooting. Owls go out and sit in trees. If hon. members opposite want to participate in the debate they should stand up; and if they do not, they should shut up.

Mr. Speaker, a former president of the United States, Mr. Harry Truman, had a sign on his desk and that sign is what the opposition is talking about: it said, "The buck stops here". That is what we say: the buck stops with the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) and nowhere else. The President of the Treasury Board was desperately concerned about the civil servants named by the Public Accounts Committee. Apparently the committee did a terrible thing to these people. But, Mr. Speaker, the reason they were named by the Public Accounts Committee was because those gentlemen did not do their job. There is no other reason. Had there not been incompetence in government, \$17 million would not have been spent on the *Bonaventure* and no public servant in Canada would have been named in any Public Accounts