

Abandonment of Defence Projects

Here the Prime Minister himself confesses that Canada's policy with regard to the acquisition of nuclear weapons is wrong. He agreed also that there is an opportunity to get out of this situation, because another agreement is necessary. He further indicates that the only reason for adhering to the policy is because, he says, we had spent a billion dollars on equipment. That is the only reason why we are carrying on with the policy. I am sure it must be an encouraging situation for the citizens of this country to contemplate—that we are carrying on a policy which was wrong when it was made four years ago, despite the fact that there is a way out, particularly when a billion dollars is at stake. I may say immediately that this figure is a gross exaggeration. It is a lot of nonsense. Nevertheless, that is the justification given for our policy. We do not have a definite policy on defence: We have an excuse, the excuse that a billion dollars has been paid for certain equipment.

It might appear that I am being somewhat harsh in my criticism of the government. Perhaps certain hon. gentlemen opposite take umbrage at the suggestion that they are supporting a government that does not even pretend to give this country a defence policy. Let us look at the record of the present Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer) to see where he stands. I recall saying in this house that in the committee on defence we would not get any information. I wish now to correct that statement. The committee certainly does not get any information about the defence situation today, but there have been some interesting revelations about what went on in 1956. I am sure those of us who have been here for some time will remember the great indignation of the hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Hellyer) every time the Arrow was mentioned. They will remember how he went up into the air as he spoke of the terrible Conservatives dropping that wonderful weapon, the Arrow. And all the time, if he were capable of blushing, he must have been hanging his head in shame every night as he remembered he was the associate minister of defence in a government decision that already made the defence decision to drop the Arrow. They had not made the political decision, but the decision based on defence requirements had been made while he was a member of that government. However, he and his colleagues were facing an election. This is what we know now of the government to which the hon. member belonged. It is not whether Canada gets sound defence that matters; it is the kind of image they can sell to the public, whether justified or not, which

matters. The politics of defence in 1956 were much more important than the defence of Canada.

In 1963, the acquisition of nuclear arms is in no way involved in the defence of Canada. I am sure we can all see it does nothing in this regard. Moreover, the method by which this government tries to sell nuclear arms on the basis of a commitment is enough to make even the most naïve person look at it again and again. Politics, not defence, is what the people of Canada get from this government.

There has been much confusion over what were commitments. For some of this confusion, we were, in part, to blame. We said there were no commitments, while on the other side they said there were, indeed, commitments. Perhaps what we should have said, was: define "commitments". We can all understand what is meant by an agreement to make an agreement. I can agree to buy a house. I can say I will definitely buy a house if we can agree on a price. To this extent, I have a commitment to buy a house. Canada had an agreement to accept nuclear arms if we could agree on a system of control which would not mean giving up our sovereignty. We tried for four years to reach such an agreement, but we failed. Finally, we said it could not be done this way—we must seek another road. Today, according to the Prime Minister, we are following a defence policy to which the previous government committed us in 1959, and we are following that policy, despite the fact that the previous government reached a decision that conditions had changed and that the problem could not be solved until we took a new look at defence problems. The previous government said that in the NATO conference they would reconsider our policies and help work out a new and sensible arrangement in which Canada could play its part. For this, we were condemned.

We could be charitable toward this government if they were to make even a pretence that nuclear arms would benefit the defence of Canada. But not even the Minister of National Defence has had the temerity or the effrontery to suggest this to us. The only excuse we have for the present ridiculous policy or lack of policy is the Prime Minister's statement that there are a billion dollars at stake. Let us consider this statement more closely. How much is involved in the two Bomarc installations? I suggest it is about \$15 million. After hearing the Liberal propaganda some people might believe there was a billion dollars right there tied up in the Bomarcs. In fact, it is less than 1 per cent of our present defence budget for one year, and I am sure no member of this house will say that putting aside this \$15 million amounts to wasteful extravagance. If we cannot find