

*Supply—National Defence*

of this vote, that is to say whether or not the aircraft which are to be built with this money are going to be armed in a certain fashion. The Prime Minister went to a Progressive Conservative association meeting since the vote—

**The Deputy Chairman:** Order. The hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate was straying beyond the point of order raised by the Minister of National Defence.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** The minister—

**Some hon. Members:** Order.

**The Deputy Chairman:** May I have the ear of the members of the committee just for a moment. Obviously the difficulty of the Chair is in differentiating between what is proper for consideration under a narrow item such as this one by way of supplementary estimates as opposed to the broader discussion that is permissible under item No. 1 of the main estimates of any particular department.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** On a question of privilege—

**The Deputy Chairman:** Order, please. I would ask to be allowed to finish what I was saying. I am not going to make a ruling. I am only asking for the co-operation of members of the committee so that there is not an encroachment by one who is more skilful to the detriment of one of the other members of the committee. Out of respect for the hon. member for Essex East I rose only to make these few comments. I should be glad to hear the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate who is also a very experienced member. However, I am only asking the committee in general and any particular member who has the floor to endeavour to make it as easy as possible for the Chair to differentiate between what is normal discussion on item No. 1 of departmental main estimates as opposed to what is discussed under the supplementary estimates.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I hope I may be permitted to complete what I was about to say as it is directly related to this matter. I say that since the main estimate was passed a very important statement has been made by the head of the government outside the house about this very item. That statement was not about any general defence policy but about this precise item and it was made outside the House of Commons. Yet in this forum of the Canadian people where both parties, the opposition and the government, are represented it is suggested by the Minister of National Defence, who is asking us to vote this money, that we must not discuss what the Prime Minister said outside the house about this particular item. He suggests that we must not discuss it in the House of Commons. A few years ago hon. gentlemen opposite including the

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

Minister of National Defence, talked about closure. However, no closure that has ever been suggested in this House of Commons compares with what the minister is now suggesting on this particular item. If the Prime Minister can discuss this item outside of the House of Commons and give new information which was never given by the minister in the house, surely we are entitled to have an elucidation of that information by the responsible minister, if he has any responsibility here in the House of Commons.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** I have listened to what you have just said, Mr. Chairman; I am sure you will find that I have no intention of veering from the area of discussion which you think is proper at the moment.

We have had it established that the Prime Minister was visualizing what could happen in the event of a third world war in which nuclear weapons would be used. He suggested—and in my judgment quite properly—that the Canadian armed forces must be equipped with the best possible weapons. We are not talking about nuclear weapons in Canada in the context of the discussion represented by the division of opinion which prevails between the Minister of National Defence and his colleague the Secretary of State for External Affairs. This is not the issue now under discussion. We are simply asking the minister what steps the Prime Minister had in mind when he said we could obtain these weapons as readily as possible. Indeed, he said we could obtain them within a very short time, namely half an hour. We are entitled to an explanation from the minister. As we all know, nuclear weapons now in the control of the United States under the law of that country cannot escape the monopolistic custody of the government of that country or its agents. The question of joint control is a matter which Mr. Rusk said the other day is open to negotiation. That statement suggests that some arrangement could be made between the United States and Canada with regard to the matter of joint control. We are entitled to have from the Minister of National Defence some comment on this phase of the matter. Is that arrangement what is in contemplation? If that arrangement is in contemplation, when does the government propose to take steps to make available within half an hour, as the Prime Minister said, these weapons which he said were essential in order to endow our military forces with the best possible weapons?

Surely this a simple question which even the Minister of National Defence cannot seek to convince us he has not understood. I am sure that he has understood it. I am equally sure that it is his responsibility to tell us