

Abandonment of Defence Projects

of dollars uselessly on defence which is no defence; that over the years we have lost any idea of defence policy because of the personalities, suspicions, ambitions and jealousies between the three services.

As a result of their experience, both of these gentlemen say that we need a unified command. Will you note this, though, Mr. Speaker? Both of them say you are never going to get a defence policy in Canada that means anything, you are never going to get efficiency in the service, you are never going to get value for your expense dollar until the government has the courage to lay down defence policy and make the brass adhere to it, or get out. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have been frustrated in this committee. Yes, we have been heartbroken in this committee. As committee members, we get most of our information from things that have been leaked to the press or from statements the minister makes to the house, without ever having had the courtesy to meet the defence committee and talk them over.

However, Mr. Speaker, despite the frustration and the set-backs, I still think that the evidence we have received thus far, and what we hope to receive in the future of a constructive nature, will make this defence committee pay off, if we are allowed to recommend an over-all policy for the future. I believe, sir, it could be done. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that all members of this house will read the evidence presented to this committee. There are only 24 members of the committee. Perhaps all hon. members can help Canada arrive at a defence policy that, for the first time, means defence; a defence policy that represents a dollar's value for a dollar spent. Perhaps those who become emotional or hysterical about some of these matters should know the words of Major General Simonds, the words of General Foulkes concerning the role they believe, as a result of their experience, Canada should play in the maintenance of peace.

I may say that I do not believe I have missed one meeting of this committee. I feel very proud, and do you know why? Those who are professional soldiers have given evidence indicating that we in this group, who are not professional soldiers, were right and have always been right in our policies for Canada in connection with defence. We have recommended a unified force in being and on call for the United Nations. This should be a highly mobile force. I regret that the mover of this motion had to resort to an attitude of partisan opposition and obstructionism as a basis for his motion instead of considering the best defence policy for Canada. I believe our committee still has a job to do and, given an opportunity, we will do it.

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[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Lessard (Lake St. John): Mr. Speaker, in taking part in this debate, I should like to begin my remarks by reminding the hon. members of this house that the committee was set up to examine and deal with the defence of Canada, something which our movement had been advocating for two years.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, the work the committee has done so far and the evidence given are enough to prove that we were right in making our proposal. I am convinced that when the committee submits its reports, which we hope will be before Christmas, it will then bring before the house, the government and the Canadian people the essence of what must be the future defence policy of our country.

I listened with attention to the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) violently attacking the government's present defence policy and especially its recent abandonment of the previous government's project of building frigates to strengthen the Canadian navy.

I wonder if the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre has seen in that step taken by the government some sort of revenge for the abandonment by the Conservatives of the Arrow project in 1957-58. The only difference in those two cases is that vast sums of money were already invested in the Arrow project while we are told that \$500,000 have been spent for the frigates.

In the light of all the evidence presented since the beginning of the committee sittings, it is obvious, I think, that the frigate construction program was absolutely useless, because they would be of no use for the purpose for which they were intended.

I am glad that the government decided not to provide more public funds for a project which is definitely doomed to fail.

On the other hand, if the government was ready to spend the sum of approximately \$500 million on that single frigate item the cancelling of which our group fully supports—we should like to see that amount spent in another sector, more economically sound for Canada, and in my opinion, in the maritime field, there is only one profitable sector for the Canadian economy, and it is the setting up of a merchant navy so that we might ship our products to the markets abroad without using the ships of other countries, as we are doing at the present time to move the wheat we have sold.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that in this attack of the official opposition against this government's policy, there are certain points