

Labour Crisis in Aircraft Industry

Mr. Hellyer: Before the minister resumes his seat, may I ask him whether it is fair to say that the contract was cancelled primarily because of the increased costs?

Mr. Pearkes: No, I certainly would not say that. I tried to explain all the way through my remarks that the main reasons for cancelling the CF-105 were the decreasing threat and therefore the lessening need of such an aircraft, the fact that it was taking too much of the defence dollar and that too large a proportion of our contribution toward the deterrent was being concentrated in that particular form.

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with a great deal of interest to the speech just delivered by the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Pearkes). I do not think he has answered the three main questions that I believe to be in the minds of the people of Canada at this time. Those questions are: What happens to the workers who are today unemployed and out on the street? Is the government contemplating any action to provide employment for these people, highly qualified as they are in a technical sense? Has the government any plans to restore them to suitable positions in order to add to the productive capacity of the Canadian nation? I have heard of no such plan.

What is the alternative to the CF-105 for Canada's defence production industry? It is correct that the minister referred to some joint undertakings that Canada and the United States will be entering upon but I would submit that he has not answered the central question as to what happens to Canadian defence production industries.

The third question that has remained unanswered is what happens to Canadian sovereignty in the very unbalanced partnership that the government has agreed to on behalf of this country? The type of motion before the house at this time is one that I am certain any opposition party had to move if it was to carry out its responsibilities as an opposition. So it is no accident that the thought of moving the adjournment of the house to discuss the question now before us was in the minds of the C.C.F. members as it was in the minds of the Liberal members.

We came into the house with a prepared motion ready to move it if the opportunity had been ours. We would have asked leave to adjourn the house to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the failure of the government to take steps to provide alternative employment for the thousands of workers in the aircraft industry before cancelling the Arrow project; the necessity of

[Mr. Pearkes.]

immediate action to provide alternative employment and projects so as to prevent the addition of many thousands to the total of unemployed; to prevent the loss of technical skills that are so necessary for Canadian development; and, further, the grave threat to national sovereignty brought about by the failure of the federal government to obtain Canada's full share of defence orders for joint North American defence. That is the motion we would have moved for the consideration of the house had the opportunity arisen.

I did not have the advantage over the weekend of talking with the people in the cities of Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener or that general area. However, it was my privilege over the weekend to go into the riding of Timiskaming and talk to a number of people in that riding. I can say to the members of this house that although northern Ontario is removed from the place of unemployment, the Avro industry, by many hundreds of miles, nevertheless the people in that area were shocked at the precipitate action of the government. They could not understand how, in a democratic society, the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) could stand up in parliament and announce something that a few hours later would result in 14,000 Canadians losing their jobs.

We think that that is one of the aspects of this whole problem that is unforgivable. We have received telegrams from the trade unions involved. I have two in my hand to which I should like to refer. The first one was sent to me by Mr. P. Podger, business representative of the international association of machinists. It reads as follows:

The unprecedented callous action of the Diefenbaker government in cancelling the Arrow with immediate resultant loss of 13,000 plus jobs is tantamount to economic treachery. The forfeiture of Canadian sovereignty to the U.S. in our defence created by the government's decision calls for the immediate defeat of the Diefenbaker government.

I may say the people might have thought some of these things some months ago with more effect. It goes on to say:

We urge you to move motion of non-confidence immediately.

The other telegram was sent by Mr. W. Jacobs, president of the draftsmen association of Ontario. It reads:

Request you use every method available to condemn government for callous treatment of engineering and skilled tradesmen and betrayal to American interests. Government must account for failure to provide substitute work for cancelled Arrow project. Demand should be made on Washington for equitable share defence production. Failing agreement basis should only be established on our terms. If possible force government to go to people to prevent complete takeover by U.S.