

Supply—National Defence

Mr. Pearson: The minister, of course, as he did this afternoon, has thrown up a smoke-screen to conceal his own unwillingness or inability to reply to the question I have asked him. The question is a very simple one. I suggested to the minister that the Canadian government accepted a certain responsibility in the NATO forces to be discharged by a Canadian air division on the understanding that that responsibility would be discharged through the use of a particular kind of equipment and that the government is now welshing on that responsibility. It is not our duty on this side to tell the government what it should or should not do in this case. We will do that when we have a debate on policy. But we believe, and the minister can set our minds at ease if he wishes to do so, that it was the understanding of SACEUR that this particular strike attack responsibility when it was turned over to the R.C.A.F. air division would be discharged by the use of weapons which would be effective for that purpose and, as the minister himself said, the only weapons that would be effective for that purpose are CF-104's armed with nuclear warheads. If that is the case then the responsibility taken on by the Canadian air division was assumed so far as NATO is concerned under a misunderstanding, to say the least. Will the minister clear up that misunderstanding and say that there is no such understanding in the NATO high command over any particular kind of equipment that will be used and that they are quite satisfied to let the decision wait until an emergency develops with respect to whether the CF-104 will use nuclear weapons in its strike attack role? Are they perfectly happy about the delay in this decision?

Mr. Harkness: There is no misunderstanding whatever. This is now the fourth time that the Leader of the Opposition or the member for Trinity have made the same statement in almost the same terms. I have replied twice already and have stated what the position of the government is. I do not think I should take the time of the committee to make the same reply once more.

Mr. Hellyer: The minister objects to discussing the question of the air division because in his opinion the matter is not urgent until the sum total of \$400 million or \$500 million in hardware is sitting on the tarmacs in Europe. Under those circumstances let us consider for a moment the question of North American air defence. Some time ago the minister said that he agreed with the speech made in Toronto last summer by General Kuter in which he said in effect that it was essential that the F-101 to be acquired by the Royal Canadian Air Force

[Mr. Harkness.]

be armed with a nuclear missile. Does the minister still agree with the expression of opinion by General Kuter at that time?

Mr. Harkness: I do not agree with the interpretation that the member for Trinity makes of that speech or of practically any other matter.

Mr. Hellyer: Then would the minister be good enough to give his own interpretation for the benefit of the committee?

The Deputy Chairman: The hon. member for Leeds.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Chairman, a question has been asked of the Minister of National Defence and he has not answered.

Mr. Churchill: The floor has been given to the hon. member for Leeds.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. I cannot take responsibility for the lack of an answer on the part of the minister. I saw the hon. member for Leeds and gave him the floor after an appropriate pause, and so he has the floor.

Mr. Matheson: Mr. Chairman, a news story of February 13, 1962, tells us that the air force remains the biggest armed services spender and that construction of the CF-104 fighters at Canadair in Montreal remains the biggest single defence program. The story points out that it is estimated that the total cost of the CF-104's will be \$450 million, of which \$302 million will have been spent by March 31. Perhaps I am approaching the same question but in another way. I should like to read to the minister part of a report in the *Globe and Mail* of January 17, 1962 in which there is the following statement:

It is known that the United States tried, but failed, to write into the Canada-U.S. agreement covering Canadian acquisition of the 66 U.S. Voodoos a clause stating that the planes would be armed as they were in the U.S.—with nuclear missiles.

The minister may answer later, but my first question to him is: Is this story true? Is it a fact that the United States tried but failed to write into the agreement a clause that Canada would acquire the nuclear missiles that render these planes useful weapons? Again, I quote from the Vancouver *Sun* of February 9, 1962. The headline is, "Canada, U.S. Not Speaking on Matters of Defence", and the article reads in part as follows:

Canada and the United States apparently aren't on speaking terms over mutual defence matters... there had been no meeting of the Canada-U.S. joint defence committee since July, 1960—some 18 months before.