

Refitting of HMCS "Bonaventure"

western provinces last week and I think we must be on our guard. Let us not take risks as we have done until now. Let us be honest administrators. If we cannot get elected by honest people without the money of those who contribute to campaign funds, we shall be defeated by others who will not necessarily be contributors to election funds and that is why I ask all members of Parliament to seriously consider the situation and tell the government what is happening, as the Auditor General of Canada was not afraid to report the facts.

However, the government does not take notice. It ignores the recommendations of the Auditor General who writes his report, throws light on wrongdoings, abuses and waste. The government does not want to see what is happening.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if the government does not do something, others will. It rests with the government, whether it is Liberal, Progressive Conservative, Cr ditiste or something else, to put its administration in order and to check its expenditures before others do it. We must see to it that each dollar collected from taxpayers is used to provide services to Canadians and make sure that integrity—and especially the administrative integrity—prevails in Canada. Thus the electors will be satisfied with our work.

• (5:30 p.m.)

[English]

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the mover of the motion, the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster (Mr. Bell), began his remarks with a background of philosophy of ministerial responsibility largely crystallized from Mr. Bagehot. As a consequence of this and because of my previous experience he asked me to give a blow by blow account of the incidents concerning the refit of the *Bonaventure* on the assumption that I had as full knowledge of the facts as perhaps anybody else.

On the government side we take no exception to the doctrine of ministerial responsibility as enunciated by Bagehot. We indeed accept the fact that public servants are responsible for their actions not to the House but to the executive—to the ministers—and are answerable not to the House but to the ministers. As a consequence, it is the ministers who must accept both real and technical responsibility for the actions of the civil serv-

ants and/or the departments for which they are administratively responsible.

However, in this matter there is an implication of a concept of continuity of government and government departments. The person who is responsible on a day to day basis for his department is the minister. In the case of the *Bonaventure* we are dealing with the administrative responsibility of two departments, namely the Department of National Defence and the Department of Supply and Services as successor to the Department of Defence Production. I think it would be much more appropriate if the minister having responsibility for these matters and for the people involved were to reply to the invitation issued by the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster, rather than myself. Later in this debate the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Cadieux) or one of my colleagues on his behalf, and the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Richardson) will be answering for the administrative responsibility they hold in relation to these two departments and their connection with the *Bonaventure* refit.

In so far as the remarks made initially by the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster are concerned, I have had a look at *Hansard* and particularly the series of questions and answers back in 1966 relating to the *Bonaventure*. I believe that anyone who reads the full text—not all of which was quoted—of these questions and answers will be satisfied in this case, firstly, that the terms and conditions of the contracting and the nature of the contracts in question were fully explained, and that at no point was there either an apparent or real misleading of the House.

When subsequent allegations appear to be different from one's earlier understanding, one is always concerned that there may have been some misleading. But having reviewed the record I am satisfied that no such situation existed in respect of the present circumstances. In so far as the motion itself is concerned, I must thank the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster for having been extremely gentle with the government. While the words of the motion on the Order Paper are highly condemnatory and are in rather intemperate language, he was sufficiently reasonable not to endeavour to adduce any evidence to support the motion.

However, while I am grateful for his consideration and gentleness, I must also thank him for providing me on a supply or opposition day with an opportunity to place on the record what is probably not very exciting