

Supply—National Defence

Mr. Hellyer: Could it under any circumstances be used to re-equip any of the Canadian interceptor squadrons presently under NATO command if the government were to decide that was something it should propose to do?

Mr. Pearkes: Re-equip any of the other squadrons? That is to say, the four squadrons—

Mr. Hellyer: No, I am talking about the nine squadrons under NORAD, if its capability would be such as to make it a reasonable fighter-interceptor as well.

Mr. Pearkes: I do not think the F-104G could be developed into an interceptor. The requirements are so different. It is a question of high speed at low altitude for strike reconnaissance aircraft, whereas an interceptor wants high speed at a high altitude.

Mr. Hellyer: Would the minister contemplate any other possibility by which Canada might now, or within the foreseeable future, re-equip any of the nine squadrons stationed in Canada?

Mr. Pearkes: There is no provision made in these estimates for such a contingency.

Mr. Hellyer: There is no provision made in the estimates, but I know how the minister feels, that it is a requirement which should in due course be met, and I also know how he feels about the aircraft industry in Canada; not that it should be just fed contracts for work which is not necessary, but that it should be given essential work and phased in such a way as to keep it operating at the greatest possible efficiency.

May I refer to the minister's own remarks on page 5220 of *Hansard* for June 20, 1956 where he is reported as saying:

Of course no warning line is of any value unless it can be backed up by interceptors, and while the white paper would indicate that there are some 21 squadrons available for the defence of Canada, the minister painted a more realistic picture of that force this afternoon when he pointed out that at the present time there are only nine regular squadrons which are equipped with a plane which is efficient for its role at the present time, namely the CF-100.

Then with respect to the aircraft industry in Canada we have a statement from the hon. member for Brandon-Souris where at page 5267 of *Hansard* for June 21, 1956, he is reported as saying:

This leads me to make just a brief comment on the importance of the air industry to Canada. Canada is a natural country for the development of a strong air industry. We are a young nation and we are on the verge of tremendous development, particularly in the northern regions. In similar manner air power is just in its infancy. We are on the threshold of tremendous achievements in the air.

[Mr. Pearkes.]

Then the present Minister of National Defence is quoted at page 5220 of *Hansard* for June 20 of 1956 as follows:

I am not in favour of discontinuing the airplane production industry here. I think it is something we have to develop and maintain. In those periods of changeover from one type of equipment to a more modern type there is always the danger of equipment being turned out which before it leaves the assembly line is obsolescent, and I am afraid that is the case at the present time with the CF-100's which will be turned out. No doubt the CF-100 Mark V, with its greater power, would be of value to combat any enemy bombers coming to this country in the near future, but its period of usefulness must be rapidly passing. The CF-105 will no doubt bridge that period until the time the guided missile is ready and available.

I have frequently wondered whether we have not rather limited the airplane production industry in asking them to develop a limited number of a type of plane. As has been indicated, there is a great shortage and there is a great need for more transport planes. I believe that the A. V. Roe Company, which has been making the CF-100's, did start a jet transport plane industry which was cancelled at the time of the Korean war.

Further on he says:

Whether or not it is possible for Canada to dispose of any of these 100's which must be surplus now I do not know, but it would seem desirable to do so.

As the minister knows, subsequently disposal was made in co-operation between Canada and the United States, and planes were made available under mutual aid to one of our NATO allies, Belgium, and it was an exchange which I believe proved to be to the benefit of all participating countries.

My questions are these. Does the minister still feel as fondly toward the aircraft industry as he did in 1956? Second, if he feels that the CF-100 was practically obsolescent in 1956, how does he square his statement, both earlier this session and today, that it is still a useful aircraft and that it is not yet obsolete and should not yet be removed from squadron service?

Mr. Pearkes: Obsolescence of aircraft depends upon the purpose for which it is to be used. The CF-100 was designed as a defence against certain Russian bombers. Now we have no knowledge that the Russians have procured any faster bombers than they had in those years. Therefore the CF-100 is still an effective aircraft.

Mr. Hellyer: It is almost ten o'clock, Mr. Chairman, but before we call it ten o'clock I would like to say to the minister that I did not mean to be unfair in the statement I made earlier about the two generals who had been here and who, according to my information, had not been encouraged to hold press conferences. If I was wrong in my contention I apologize. The allegations that I made were based on information supplied to