

*Refitting of HMCS "Bonaventure"*

House that there was a long history to the whole *Bonaventure* issue, long before the committee report was made. To repeat what I said here today, I want to give everybody an opportunity to take part in this debate. I feel it is extremely important that we air this matter in Parliament and that the minister give us his full story.

I think that the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) must, on behalf of the government accept full responsibility for the *Bonaventure* matter. He should rise in his place today and tell us the whole story, as he knows it, from the very beginning in 1966. He should start with the original tendering and the award of the contract that he made, as minister of defence production, in 1966. He should deal with the first contract escalation, to which I did not refer but it is all in *Hansard*, from \$5 million to \$8 million. Perhaps I had better put that on the record because that was a matter in which I became involved.

Before the ship had left Halifax to go into the St. Lawrence, we heard there was going to be an even further escalation of the cost. I asked a question with regard to that and the minister was straightforward at the time. On April 22, 1966, I asked this question:

Will the minister check into reliable reports emanating from Halifax this morning as the *Bonaventure* left Halifax with Department of Industry officials aboard, that the estimate will probably go over \$8 million?

I can only say that at that time the contract had escalated to \$8 million. Therefore, there is an extra responsibility on the minister since he knew in the early days of this contract that the cost was escalating and he should have, if he did not, called in his officials. He should tell us of the various conferences he has had with them, whether this matter was referred to him by his civil servants and, if so, what was the action. The minister should deal specifically with items 5 and 6 of the committee report to which I referred. He should report on the inquiry that he said has been under way in the department. On television the other night the minister referred to some sort of an inquiry having been inaugurated, unless my facts are incorrect.

It is incumbent upon the minister to give us the whole story for the following two reasons: first, because of our established tradition that a minister should stand behind his deputy and his other civil servants, as I have outlined in the quotations I brought forward; and second, and just as important, because there must now finally begin an accounting

of the government's action regarding the two recommendations which were passed unanimously by the Public Accounts Committee.

I look forward to hearing the minister's reply as I move this motion, seconded by the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestal).

**Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West):** I, too, would like to hear the minister's statement on the remarks made by the previous speaker. I will try not to cover the same ground covered by him. I find that the motion before the House is an extremely interesting one, particularly as it deals with protecting the public treasury from spending by the government. The motion, as I see it, deals with the important problem of planning, supervision and efficiency in government expenditures. I feel this is a very timely topic, especially in view of the government's present austerity program. I feel it is our job as elected representatives to insist on efficiency in government and to demand that the taxpayers' money be spent without waste and in the best interests of the nation generally. I might add that there will always be disagreement among the various parties as to the priorities for public spending and the emphasis which should be placed on certain government programs. However, there should be no disagreement when it comes to demanding that inefficiency and waste be eliminated wherever it exists. There is no doubt that there is abundant evidence to show that large amounts of public money have been wasted because of inefficiency and lack of co-ordination in a number of government departments.

● (4:30 p.m.)

The Auditor General is the watchdog of government spending. His annual reports are the basis upon which the Public Accounts Committee is able to check into some of the expenditures being made by the various government departments. It was through the Auditor General's report that the Public Accounts Committee investigated the expenditures made on the refit of the aircraft carrier *Bonaventure* and eventually turned up the mess of ineffectiveness and incompetence which existed in the letting of a number of contracts.

This investigation resulted in the 41 page report of the Public Accounts Committee which was presented to this House about a month ago, and which was a biting indictment of the slipshod and haphazard methods used by the Department of Defence Produc-