

Supply—National Defence

arm in support of the land forces. It is to provide additional firepower and air support. It will be formed in squadrons and in an air brigade under the command of mobile commander, to be used by him in support of the balance of his force in the way that any other arm would be used.

The techniques of supporting ground forces are well known to my hon. friend. There is nothing strange or mysterious about them, except that it has been a long while since the R.C.A.F. was involved in this particular role. It is one in which it excelled in world war II, and one which is becoming of increasing importance in view of the real strategic situation in the world today, with the likelihood of conflagrations involving active air defence or in which the use of the nuclear strike squadrons in Europe is diminishing, and where the likelihood of having to use something short of that, such as ground support aircraft in other parts of the world, is considerably greater so far as probability is concerned.

Therefore I think the role has been well established and I think the evidence will show that for the purposes we have in mind, for getting into the tactical aircraft business again, this is a good decision and it will be a first class aircraft for the particular task being assigned to it.

Mr. Nielsen: Would the minister mind answering one or two of my specific questions while he has his experts here? Can he tell me, for instance, what is the speed his experts feel advisable should be the capability of a pure jet aircraft such as the one under discussion in a ground support role, and what heights the minister, again on the advice of his experts, believes that ground support is necessary in which to employ the CF-5?

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Chairman, I think this is the kind of information that can much better be dealt with before the standing committee.

Mr. Diefenbaker: We want information. We want none of this evasion that went on last night. We want answers.

Mr. Hellyer: I do not want to enter into an argument with my right hon. friend—

Mr. Diefenbaker: I hope not.

Mr. Hellyer: I don't want to do that, but he has had some problems with airplanes in his day.

Mr. Diefenbaker: But I never used them during an election campaign to find out their practicability.

Mr. Churchill: What height were you flying at?

• (8:10 p.m.)

Mr. Hellyer: He started out with a high altitude interceptor and tried to make a low level bomber out of it. This is not too long ago, and when it comes to a choice of aircraft, and modification to make it suitable for a particular task, he is quite an expert, having gone through it once or twice himself. I think you will recall, because of this, probably just how complicated and difficult it is in the committee of the whole house to use figures in the circumstances which are meaningful enough to be helpful.

Mr. Nielsen: Will the minister say that he does not know?

Mr. Hellyer: No.

Mr. Nielsen: Then will the minister answer my questions; there are two very simple questions, questions which the minister should be able to answer with the officials he has before him. My own belief is that the aircraft does not have this performance capability that would allow it to be used in the role in which it is intended to employ it. Whether or not my view on the matter is correct, surely the minister is going to be gracious enough to allow the rest of us to share in this tremendous knowledge he has of these technical matters, and particularly when the two questions are so brief and simple.

Mr. Hellyer: I think I should refer my hon. friend to the interim reports on the Skoshi Tiger tests which were in the same kind of a ground support role, including interdiction, in the Viet Nam war, and where the airplane has performed admirably under those circumstances; where it was able to deliver on target a vast quantity of stores; where it was able to perform a very high number of sorties; where the cost of keeping it in operation, because of the low number of man-hours required per flight hour, was very low; where the attrition rate was very low, because this aircraft is less susceptible to ground fire than some of the other airplanes which my hon. friend might be thinking of; and where there were many other tests that it was subjected to in respect of which it performed admirably in the type of role that we would expect it to perform.

Mr. Churchill: What does that mean?

Mr. Nielsen: The minister has made a concerted effort to dazzle us with his footwork. The question I asked him remains