

million as well as some pessimistic estimates of \$300 million or \$400 million—is the result of learning from past mistakes, and what does he plan to do if the figures go awry as did those for the *Bonaventure*?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): It is evident that the hon. member does not follow questions very closely, nor was he listening very carefully. The fact is that my remark about *Bonaventure* was that the mistake was in keeping an aircraft carrier in the service. I concede that perhaps this is wisdom after the event. In 1964, when the refit was being considered—and that was the general opinion of the navy—it was considered that an aircraft carrier was an effective weapon. In the fullness of time it became increasingly apparent that aircraft carriers are not effective weapons to keep in service, particularly with the kind of responsibilities that we have.

If we had to do it over again we would probably have retired it from service at the time and concentrated our efforts on the helicopter-destroyer program. The hon. member is not a member of the Committee on External Affairs and National Defence and was not able to participate in the discussion which we had there on the DDH program. I made it perfectly clear to the committee at that time that I was not happy with the cost overrun.

Mr. Nowlan: There is slippage, such as for the *Bonaventure*.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): The hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Roberts) said that he had difficulty in communicating a significant thought to the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East in the limited time available. I think that even with unlimited time one could not communicate anything to the hon. member for Annapolis Valley (Mr. Nowlan).

The fact remains that I have not been happy with the management of that program and I hope we can have an examination of the manner in which it was carried out. However, there does not seem to be any disagreement basically, and I take it that the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East does not disagree that these are good ships and that they will perform well the service for which they were designed.

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I support the motion which is now before the House. Indeed, I would go beyond what it states, namely, that the government's defence policy has merely led to a questioning of our credibility by our allies. I have not the least doubt that they have already ceased to question our credibility as a reliable partner in our international alliances because we have made it manifestly clear that our armed service is to be nothing more than a glorified domestic police force with some additional minor responsibilities for defending our coastal territory, particularly our fishing grounds, against foreign invaders, provided that these invaders are from countries not larger in size than Denmark or Norway.

In the *Winnipeg Free Press* of March 8, 1971, there appeared an editorial entitled "Defence—the last priority". I should like to quote at length from that editorial, not only because it appeared in a newspaper which has

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such a long tradition of supporting the Liberal party but because it states in language which is abundantly clear to anyone just how misguided are this government's defence policies. The editorial reads:

The contradictions in Canada's foreign and defence policies have become so glaring that it hardly requires an example, such as is contained in the British statement on defence estimates, to illuminate the Ottawa authorities' cavalier attitude toward defence. We still seem desperately bothered about the stupidity of unification and what colour of uniform our officers and non-commissioned officers will wear. Fortunately, our planners do not have to bother about soldiers, an insignificant minority in our defence establishment—17,850 privates as against 68,155 officers and non-commissioned officers. In the polychrome slick brochures that are to explain Canada's foreign policies, the government tells us grandly about the need to find a more stable and mutually acceptable balance of power in the Pacific. But we tell the Commonwealth nations in Singapore that Canada really does not care if somebody pulls the plug out of the Indian Ocean.

Where the British government "firmly believes that its intention to restore the armed forces to their rightful place in the life of the nation and to keep defence in the front rank of its priorities will in itself provide a direct encouragement to recruitment", Canada has relegated defence to the bottom of her priorities.

Yet defence is not a pipe dream of some military industrial complex, as is often imputed to those who watch with anxiety the growing power of the Soviet Union. "Western security", says the British document, "remains under the shadow of the present and potential threat of the vast military resources of the Soviet Union. The threat is not restricted to the NATO area"—an area upon which Canada is turning her back. "Backed by its still growing strategic nuclear capability, its large and modern conventional forces and its rapidly expanding navy and merchant marine, the Soviet Union is engaged in enhancing its power and influence across the world".

At a time when the western world, and Canada among the foremost, has been freezing or cutting its defence spending, the Warsaw pact nations have been increasing theirs at the rate of 6 per cent a year over the past five years. The new strategic situation of the nine Soviet divisions stationed in Czechoslovakia since 1968 has not been altered despite the talk about detente. Closer to home, the North Atlantic in April, 1970, witnessed the largest ever concentration of Soviet ships engaged in a major maritime exercise. The Caribbean is also an area of increasing activity for the Soviet navy. The situation in the Mediterranean is particularly alarming.

• (3.30 p.m.)

Five years ago the maximum number of Soviet naval vessels in the Mediterranean was five surface ships, five submarines and ten auxiliaries. In 1970, on the latest assessment, this has risen to 30 surface ships, ten submarines, and 25 auxiliaries.

Under its government, Canada is going through the process of shrugging off its old and tried friends, particularly Great Britain and other European Common Market members, in favour of social and political alliances with countries with whom in the past we have not shared common interests or with whom we have not had any substantial contact. There is a great deal of concern being expressed at present that the Soviet Union is finding the sympathetic ear of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to weaken even further NATO's critical role in the defence of the free world.