

*Refitting of HMCS "Bonaventure"*

**Mr. Bell:** There is a man who has it both ways.

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** The chairman of that committee is not a government member.

**Mr. Hees:** The Liberal party has a majority.

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** The government does not have a majority. The number of opposition members and the number of government members is equal.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** The chairman of that committee is a member of the opposition. If the member for Dartmouth-Halifax East is going to censure someone in this regard, he should censure the presiding officer of that committee. I do not intend to do so. I say on behalf of my colleagues that we regret this procedure of making specific attacks on individual public servants. The President of the Treasury Board set out the theory in this regard, to which we adhere. Public servants do not respond to Parliament; they respond to the minister responsible. That is the position on behalf of the government in this regard. I hope other committees of the House will not indulge in the same practice which was condoned by the hon. member for Wellington in allowing an attack on individual public servants.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts is a very important and essential committee of this House. The third report of that committee, which has been presented to the House, refers extensively to the *Bonaventure* refit. The report to which I have referred deals with the midlife improvement and refit of the *Bonaventure*. Construction of the *Bonaventure* commenced in the United Kingdom in 1942 during World War II. The ship was not completed in time to see service in World War II and work was suspended shortly thereafter. The hull was acquired for the Royal Canadian Navy in July, 1952. The ship was completed in a United Kingdom shipyard and commissioned by the Royal Canadian Navy in 1957. Prior to the refit the ship had been in service continuously except for periods of minor refit and repair.

The refit, which began in 1966, was its first major refit and the project included improvements and replacements of certain systems to maintain its reliability and operational capability. At that time it was expected that the ship would remain in service until 1975, if not longer. However, it was decided last year to

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

retire the ship from service in 1970. This decision, with a number of other changes, resulted from the recent defence review and the need to restrict defence expenditures to the 1969 budget level for the following three years.

It was a difficult decision to make, but it was a forces-wide reduction. After a searching re-examination of Maritime Command's operational commitments, it became a choice between taking the *Bonaventure* out of commission or reducing the fleet by a number of destroyer escorts. It was decided that it was preferable to retain the destroyers. By taking the *Bonaventure* out of commission the department was able to free \$10 million to \$12 million annually for these other needs.

• (8:30 p.m.)

The proceedings of the committee leading to this report and the report itself have received a great deal of public attention. The report refers by name or position to certain officers of both departments and implies that they were deficient in the performance of their duties to the degree that disciplinary action may be required. The principles are clear. Disciplinary procedures have been established in accordance with the law of the Parliament of Canada for both the public service and the armed forces.

**Mr. Woolliams:** What about the minister?

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** These are designed to ensure the protection of the individual from injustice as well as to protect the interests of the public. Parliament has been diligent in its protection of these rights, even though an hon. member opposite may be facetious about them. The Minister of National Defence is responsible in his department to ensure that discipline is administered in accordance with the procedures established by the law of this Parliament. In view of the allegations contained in this report, which reflect on certain officers of his department, he considered it essential to deal with these matters today, and I do so on his behalf.

The report states, on page 775, paragraph 6, under "General Conclusions and Recommendations":

The committee fails to understand why the Deputy Ministers of National Defence and Defence Production, realizing that the cost of the refit of the *Bonaventure* was, month by month, getting out of control, did not order an "on the job" investigation.

The Minister of National Defence and I have been unable to find any evidence before