

Abandonment of Defence Projects

was a member of the opposition and he and I were trying to get information on the estimates. It is very strange what happens to members when they cross the floor from one side of the house to the other.

The present special committee of the house was given very great responsibilities. There has been a great deal of criticism of the committee in the press both in reports and editorials, but I do not think the members of that committee should be too concerned about that, as long as they try to do the job for which they were appointed. We have not been allowed to do the job for which we were appointed because over the weeks it has been made clear to us that the Minister of National Defence, in view of his responsibilities in that position and as a member of the government, would make his own decisions. Therefore the committee was basically a window dressing show behind the curtains of which the government would do whatever it jolly well pleased.

This has disturbed a great number of the members of that committee because, first of all, we read in the newspapers leakages as to probable or possible policy and then at the very time we are receiving evidence on certain phases of defence policy an announcement is made by the government as to what the policy is, without the government even having the decency or courtesy to say a word to the special committee on defence.

A few moments ago I criticized the previous speaker for using "I" so much, but may I say that on three occasions in the defence committee meetings I suggested we should give consideration to whether or not the committee should be disbanded, because we were just being used as window dressing or camouflage while the government was proceeding to reach its own decisions as to what it was going to do, anyway.

Irrespective of that, Mr. Speaker, I think there is a major job which can be done by the committee, and that is the laying down of a defence policy over the years and giving some indication of our views in that regard on the basis of the evidence we have had from some very excellent witnesses. It is only because I think we still have a job to do in analysing the past and the present and trying to lay down an over-all picture for the years ahead that I am still prepared to remain a member of the committee.

But I do want to point this out and I do so by way of a challenge, if you like, to the previous speaker because, I did not think he was fair. I believe he spoke from the point of view of Conservative opposition bias, and not as a member of parliament and of the committee of the house which is making an analysis in the interests of Canada to find out

[Mr. Winch.]

what our defence policy should be. There are times, sir, when you must recognize that partisanship is not the right attitude to adopt. Admittedly, it was a serious thing when the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer) told this House of Commons that the government had reached a decision to eliminate the expenditure of \$425 million on the general frigate program. Of course, sir, this announcement hit our shipyards very hard. It hits hard at thousands of our workers in the shipyards.

But, sir, if the members of this House of Commons are motivated by sincerity and honesty, then they must act on the basis of principle. I say, Mr. Speaker, that if you accept the statement made by the vice-admiral who appeared before the defence committee, all the evidence tended to show that the general frigate program would not aid the defence of Canada, would not improve our contribution to NATO or any other alliance and was a useless expenditure of the taxpayers' money. Therefore, anyone who guides himself by principle and not partisanship, by being constructive and not obstructionist, can only agree from the evidence which we have received in our defence committee, that in this respect the government made the right decision. They made it with understanding of the need for maintaining our shipyard industry. It was for this reason they immediately introduced a \$110 million program for ship construction for peaceful purposes. I hope the government will also give consideration to our proposal for maintaining our shipyards on a full time basis by rectifying a mistake they made in the past and starting a Canadian merchant marine for use in peacetime and, if it is required, God help us, in time of war.

Our experience on this defence committee has been to some extent most frustrating, but also most interesting. We have heard from such men as Major General Simonds, General Foulkes, the former chief of staff or chairman of the joint chiefs of staff. These men have given us an indication, from their experience and their knowledge, of the part they think Canada could, should or might play with a comprehensive, understandable and reasonable defence policy. They have pointed out in the clearest possible terms that Canada has no part to play as a nuclear power. Both of these men have pointed out emphatically that Canada has nothing to gain, nothing to offer either tactically or strategically, with nuclear weapons. These two men, with their most remarkable experience, say that Canada has an entirely different role to play. Both Major General Simonds and General Foulkes, if you will read the evidence they gave before the committee, say that Canada has spent millions