

*Abandonment of Defence Projects*

arrive at really constructive and far reaching suggestions.

Mr. Speaker, after several months of hesitation and indecision—and here, I do not blame the former minister of national defence—on the part of the previous administration, this government could not afford to wait very long before reaching a decision. I must therefore commend the Minister of National Defence for the serious work he does as the head of his department where an exhaustive investigation of the present defence policy was undertaken to give it a new direction if need be, taking into account the importance of curbing some expenditures and of eliminating some others which could be considered as less vital.

I cannot see how the performance of the department could come in conflict with the defence committee, because I am convinced that eventually, both will meet at some crossroads and then, we shall be in a better position to judge the efficiency of the work done and the ground covered.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the Canadian people would have been really justified to be shocked about the implementation of a program which was to cost \$452 million, which completely ignored the investigation now under way on defence questions and which was devoid of any planning.

I would ask the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre to tell us whether, in his opinion, a single member of the defence committee would have dared defend such a program, especially after the evidence given before the committee by Lieutenant General Guy Simonds and General Charles Foulkes, both of them ex-military men of renown, who occupied the highest post in our armed forces.

As mentioned by the minister in his statement of October 24, this decision was made after a thorough study of the program, and we must admit that the reasons put forward by the minister are fairly in line with certain points of view which were presented to the defence committee. The more so because, on the economic side, the present government still wanted to show the population it took its responsibilities, when the Minister of Transport (Mr. McIlraith) announced a shipbuilding program, the cost of which will reach close to \$110 million, and which shall be completed in the years 1963, 1964 and 1965.

And, Mr. Speaker, what about the statement of the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys (Mr. Benidickson) who, this afternoon, announced the construction of 12 additional ships—12 hydrographic research and survey ships—at a cost of \$50 million.

We have therefore abolished a program of military expenditures, the cost of which appeared exorbitant, if we take into account

[Mr. Laniel.]

especially the fact that the very efficiency of those general purpose frigates was questioned and that the part they would play was most controversial. We have instead preferred a shipbuilding program originating in the Department of Transport and the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys, at a greatly lower cost, whereas the ships shall be much more useful to the Canadian people. The building of these ships will start immediately, so that unemployment will not be increased by the scrapping of the program. Common sense and reason have prevailed, and the present government has established that it wants to assume its responsibilities in every possible field.

Mr. Speaker, concerning the subamendment of the hon. member for Villeneuve, about the storing of nuclear warheads in the province of Quebec, my hon. friend has proved once more that he is content to exercise his political action in one province only, and that his dissident group is not capable of grasping the situation in its national context. The hon. leader of the Caouettistes and of the Gregorians goes as far as to say he is speaking, in his subamendment, on behalf of the Quebec members belonging to the various political parties. I will ask him however, with all due respect, to exclude me from his statement, because I consider it as wholly irresponsible, and tainted with a partisan spirit. I would suggest to my hon. friend to go back in thought to the last electoral campaign. He will remember that the leader of the Liberal party had adopted a very definite and categorical position on the subject of our obligations towards our allies. Some people derided us, when we said that we were anxious first of all to fulfil our obligations—that is precisely what we are doing at the moment—and that afterwards, if necessary, we would revise the situation, and try to establish if it were necessary to re-orient our policy, in order to better adapt it to our desires.

Mr. Speaker, Canada is a member of NATO and of NORAD, and I am convinced that this duty and this right are recognized by nearly all Canadians.

When the hon. member for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette) says that we have accepted the storing of nuclear weapons in the face of universal protest, he is not entirely faithful to truth. Our position on that point has been extremely precise; in spite of a few inevitable protests, the people of the province of Quebec have given us their unconditional support. We appeared before the electorate as a fully responsible party; we formed a government which is ready to assume its responsibilities and to meet its obligations. We carry on the