

Supply—National Defence

military equipment they wanted, then the only role of defence production was to go out and get it. As a matter of fact, once Right Hon. C. D. Howe told the house facetiously that if the Department of National Defence put in a request for a gold plated piano he would have no recourse but to go out and buy it. Yet we are told today and expected to believe that the Department of National Defence went to the Department of Defence Production hat in hand and said, "We would like an airplane. Here is a whole list of airplanes. Which one would you like to buy for us?" How can that be called a military decision? How can that be called a decision based on the interests of the fighting men in Europe who have the responsibility of protecting life and limb for Canadians and all the people of the western world?

Then we are told by the minister that this plane is suited for the role, that its serviceability was a high consideration and also its availability. Let us consider some of the facets of this plane. Let us consider its suitability for the role. I told the committee last night that this plane was designed as a high altitude air superiority fighter, and the minister has not denied that fact this morning.

Mr. Pearkes: That was the original type, not the plane we are getting now. The plane we are getting now was never designed for that purpose.

Mr. Hellyer: I wonder whether the minister would tell us exactly what the differences are between the original type and the type we are going to get. The minister and the committee should well know that you cannot have a plane which is designed to fill properly these two roles, high altitude air superiority fighting and low altitude reconnaissance and strike fighting.

Mr. Pearkes: I have said that.

Mr. Hellyer: You cannot design a high speed truck for highway use which is any good to you in the mud. Similarly you cannot take a mudder, put it on the highway and expect to get any speed out of it. It is precisely the same thing with aircraft. You cannot design an aircraft which works equally well at high altitudes and low altitudes. Certainly the R.C.A.F. knows that, certainly the defence department knows that, but perhaps the cabinet and cabinet defence committee do not know it.

Mr. Pearkes: What utter nonsense you are talking. There are two planes.

Mr. Hellyer: Just wait until I am finished you can answer then. This aircraft has one of the smallest wing areas and one of the

[Mr. Hellyer.]

smallest and thinnest wings of any aircraft in use today. What is the United States evaluation of it. The United States put in an order for 700 planes and later reduced it to 300. The United States are using them at the present time, but the only reason they are using them is that they have got them. If they had to order again they would not order them.

Mr. Horner (Jasper-Edson): How do you know? Substantiate these things.

Mr. Hellyer: The minister has made no effort to give us any information which would substantiate the government's decision.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Hellyer: I am trying to give you some facts and you will not even listen. This plane, as I told the committee last night, has an engine which at the present time is the least reliable among the planes of the United States air force inventory. Consider this, Mr. Chairman. At high altitudes, of course, it does not make any difference, and the Lockheed Corporation boasts that the engine is almost powerful enough to pick the plane up without wings and hurtle it into the air. After you get to 50,000 or 60,000 feet, where it was designed to operate, what difference does it make whether your engine conks out when you can press a button, out you will go, your parachute will open and you will drift silently and gently down to somewhere? Consider, however, the strike reconnaissance role of an aircraft hurtling through the air at low altitudes of a few hundred or a few thousand feet when the engine ceases to function. The pilot has no time whatever to do any thinking. This aircraft, which has very small and very thin wings, under those circumstances will just plummet to the ground like a dead pigeon.

An hon. Member: Just like your argument.

Mr. Hellyer: It is among the most impractical of all aircraft to operate at low altitudes where there is high air density.

Then the minister went on to talk about the economic side. Before we leave the evaluation of this aircraft, I may say that we took from what the minister told us this morning that it had been considered by the R.C.A.F. experts all along. Let us check back on some of the records available. First of all, Mr. Chairman, here is a clipping dated May 20 of this year. It is from the *Globe and Mail* and was written by their Ottawa