

*National Defence Act Amendment*

This, I do not deny.

—but we can have this unification in military departments.

The United States has unification, integration and all the things the Minister of National Defence is trying to tell us are absolutely necessary. Indeed, perhaps in many ways they are. However, the United States has not lost sight of the essential necessity of retaining the separate identities for at least the reasons I have just mentioned. I will not go into those in detail.

Let us look for a moment or two at the white paper which is supposed to contain the criteria for what we are doing. In part, the white paper says this, at the very outset:

Following the most careful and thoughtful consideration, the government has decided that there is only one adequate solution. It is the integration of the armed forces under a single chief of defence staff and a single defence staff. This will be the first step toward a single, unified defence force for Canada.

The minister says it is going to take a long time before we get there. I hope he is absolutely right. I hope it is many, many years.

The principle and concept embodied in this statement gives very wide scope for members to participate in this debate, Mr. Speaker. In my opinion, there are at least three aspects that must be carefully studied. The first is the effect of having a single chief of defence staff; second, the effect on professionalism of having a single defence staff composed as it is at present; third, the very apparent absence of rational thought at this particular stage on unification. It seems that a step is taken, and if the ice does not break, then you put your next foot forward.

Let us look at the single chief of staff first. Under such a system there will invariably be a minister who is untrained or, if he has military experience, by the time he rises to the position of responsibility of minister he will be somewhat behind the times in overall military matters. However, he will be responsible for the management of the armed services. He will face a chief of defence staff who, under this concept, will likely be fully and completely trained in one of the services.

As I understand it, in no small way the chief of defence staff performs much the same task as the minister. Under the present setup, he will be an extension of the minister at the military level. As long as both the chief of defence staff and the minister see eye to eye, there will not be any serious problem. However, let there be a major difference of

opinion, particularly professional opinion, and the resulting clash must inevitably lead to the destruction of one of them. I am sure the minister is aware of the report of the Esher committee of 1904, which is going back some 63 years. This committee advised against the commander in chief concept in other than a purely operational theatre.

There is another problem, Mr. Speaker, and that is having at the top only those who will agree with the minister. I think this situation is quite obvious and there is no need for me to illustrate the problems that could develop. The Esher committee itself, in that very excellent report, dealt with all the ramifications that develop when this type of clash takes place. This is a weakness which has occurred in our defence structure before, but never with the alarming rate of incidence that it has in the last 18 months.

We know, and it remains a fact no matter what the reason is, that all of those of senior military rank who have opposed the minister on obviously rational and respected grounds have left the armed services. These were professional men who felt that a matter of principle was at stake. Brigadier Malone had this to say on this aspect:

The single chief with the one minister will never be satisfactory. The dominant personality will always destroy the other. We can hardly expect any man to become chief of defence staff who is not a man of very aggressive, strongly opinionated nature. Equally, we cannot expect any government to select a minister who will control about a quarter of the budget who isn't a strong man.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the difficulties which can arise from the old committee or defence council concept, there can be no doubt it is essential that a committee or council be appointed to deal with all aspects of management and policy aspects. Indeed, the minister recognizes this need in his move to bring about stability to his present top echelon. I suggest the committee will function correctly only if the officers representing the three professional environments, land, sea and air, work with equal status to the chief in advising the minister or the associate minister of the problems presently confronting them.

● (9.30 p.m.)

There is one important aspect to having the three environments properly represented at the top. The point may be minor, but personnel serving in any branch of the armed services are much more competent, and more prepared to accept decisions handed down if they know they are represented at the decision-making level by one of their own kind.