

*National Defence Act Amendment*

**Mr. Nugent:** I want to say a few words tonight, principally because of the intervention made by the hon. member for Medicine Hat—not that he said anything about the bill, but certainly his attitude echoed the prevailing sentiment on the other side of the house. Several of the things he said found an echo there because as usual the hon. member was following the line which he knows will please those who dominate him in this house—the Liberal party.

He said, in essence, that the committee had heard enough speeches—that it was the democratic thing, now, to vote. Hon. members, he said, wanted to vote on the issue and had the right to vote, now. It seems to me this illustrates several fundamental errors in the thinking of the hon. member for Medicine Hat, errors shared by hon. members who sit opposite. They are not sure enough as to the duty of members of this house or, at least, their idea of their duty does not coincide with mine. They have no conception as to the seriousness of this legislation and they do not understand the duty of a member when he feels that a course proposed by the government is basically very wrong. I refuse to accept the proposition that the minds of hon. members are so settled that they cannot be reached by some of the facts which have been so clearly brought out before the committee. I feel that when, presented in the proper light, the evidence is so clear that some of those who sit opposite will come round to our point of view.

I cannot comprehend the attitude taken by the hon. member for Medicine Hat. He seems to believe that when carrying on a fight the only question to be considered is whether you are likely to win or lose. I do not know whether it is my Irish ancestry or not, but the only thought I have is that when something is bad, you fight it. And when the results are likely to be very, very serious, you must fight it with every weapon you have. Any other concept is unacceptable to me. The hon. member's attitude—"It looks hopeless so why don't you give in?"—is one I can neither accept nor understand.

It seems to me that part of the democratic process consists of an attempt to persuade. That process includes making sure that the people of this country understand the issues. As members of the opposition we have the right to attempt to convey the facts to the people so that they may understand—to awaken their comprehension of what is going on. In consequence they might express themselves in a way which would have its effect

on members opposite, so that we might even intimidate them—if I may use that word—to the point at which they would go slow with this measure. And that is the most which has been asked by so many defence critics.

I would point out to hon. members that of the time taken on this bill in the committee and in this house, about half has been spent in discussion of the method adopted by the government in bringing forward its legislation on this subject—something about which the utmost concern was expressed by the ministers senior advisers who criticized the unseemly haste which the government was adopting, despite the fact that there is no logical reason for its passage at this time. There must be a suspicion in the minds of the people of this country that perhaps there is a reason for this delay and for our belief that the longer this takes the better the people will be educated as to the facts. Once they know the facts they will realize what the government is doing, and the government will be found to be in the wrong. If this indeed be the situation, I suggest that hon. members on the other side are being political when they tell us that now is the time to take a vote. They are worried about their political skins and are scared to death that the people will awaken to the truth of what the Liberals intend to do in this country. They fear the people will give us their support in time to stop them. We hope it will come to that.

● (9:50 p.m.)

I was amazed at the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Justice, for one, who suggested, "This is democracy. We want to vote now. Our minds are made up." Apparently the wish to speak on this is antidemocratic. The hon. member for Leeds and other hon. members opposite used somewhat the same argument by saying, "Let us get on with the job," as though only the vote is the job, and the consideration and the right of persuasion is not part of the job.

I would point out that those who labour under this apprehension of what democracy consists of certainly have a strange idea of democratic functions in this country. I loathe that tone of unctuous righteousness with which the hon. member for Medicine Hat puts forward his idea of, "Vote. Let the majority rule, and that is democracy." Of course if one belongs to the Social Credit party one must learn that tone of unctuous righteousness because this is the way they always talk.