

*National Defence Act Amendment*

**Mr. Dinsdale:** With your permission, Mr. Chairman, and that of the committee I should like to finish this point.

**The Chairman:** Does the hon. member have the permission of the committee to continue?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

● (3:50 p.m.)

**Mr. Dinsdale:** I thank the committee and you, sir, for this consideration. The removal of interservice rivalry has been put forward as one of the main reasons for the necessity for unification. But what are we doing? We are developing a mobile command which will constitute a large part of our Canadian armed forces; 29,000 men will be in the command when it reaches its peak. Its headquarters are located at St. Hubert, which again is contrary to good military policy because we are locating the headquarters or the core of our armed forces on the fringe of a metropolitan complex which would be the first to be destroyed in the event of a missile attack. Hitherto the emphasis has always been on decentralization and dispersal of our strategic military headquarters. It would be much better to have it out in the west—I suppose the west is expendable; at least it is from the government's standpoint—where there will be no danger of obliteration by ICBM's which most probably will be aimed at Toronto and Montreal. St. Hubert, which is the heart of our mobile command, sits right in the centre of the target. This makes no sense whatsoever.

The mobile command consists of three infantry brigades in Canada and later will include four squadrons of CF-5 jet attack planes, as well as Buffalo transport planes and heavy and light helicopters.

It has administrative control of the infantry brigade in Europe. It is also expected that mobile command will take over maritime command's fleet, the replenishment vessel, the *Provider*, as a troopship, and two similar ships for which contracts were recently awarded. The maritime command being mainly naval is of course disturbed about this. The R.C.A.F. component of maritime command, the four squadrons of patrol planes, is obviously unhappy about being swallowed by the navy. Also the R.C.A.F. fear that mobile command will try to get its hands on air transport command. This seems to be inevitable in view of the course that is being taken at present. It leaves the air force with only the air division in Europe, and the air defence command, and both these roles are withering away.

[The Chairman.]

The minister said there are no complaints in the armed forces. He said the troops are rejoicing at what is taking place. This is not what my mail says, this is not what my war-time buddies say. They are trying to get my ear at every opportunity to try to encourage us to stop this headlong rush toward confusion on which the government is embarked at the present time.

These informants tell me that the old power struggle between the three services is being rapidly replaced by an even fiercer struggle between the field commands. Inevitably we will be faced with the situation where mobile command has become a power unto itself. This will create divisions and jealousies. Unification will destroy the old names and the old esprit de corps. The second state will be much worse than the first.

It is these considerations that have persuaded me to address myself again to the minister as an old friend. A short time ago the minister was making laudatory headlines with regard to the necessary reorganization of integration. However, today he is beating his head against the wall and is rapidly losing his reputation. Let us, in the spirit of democratic institutions everywhere, try to come to some reasonable compromise. Let us either accept some of the amendments which were put forward in the committee's discussions, or else perhaps let us delay the proclamation, if that will resolve the present impasse which faces the house. Another possibility, which I think might be the wise course to take, would be to withdraw the bill. The bill is not necessary. We have all the legislative power that we need. Let us move forward step by step to make sure we do not make the fundamental errors that other totalitarian states have made in this twentieth century.

[Translation]

**Mr. Caouette:** Mr. Chairman, to change slightly the tone of this debate which has lasted for several days, and even several weeks, I should like to say that it stirs no interest in the public. I feel that the Conservative members would put an end to this useless and futile debate were it not for their fear of losing face as a result of the attitude they adopted long ago.

They have accused us of wanting to help the government by voting in favour of the unification of the Canadian armed forces.

Mr. Chairman, in the public at large, we meet people who favour unification, and others who are against it. For that matter, the situation is the same here in parliament.