

Interim Supply

session of Parliament, except Loans, Investments and Advances Item L32b, for which no proportion is granted—\$2,252,250.00,

be granted to Her Majesty on account of the fiscal year ending 31st March, 1967.

• (3:20 p.m.)

Mr. Forrestall: Mr. Chairman, when six o'clock was called last evening I had reached the final stage of my remarks so I will not take up too much of the committee's time this afternoon. I just wish to round out the point I was leading up to in my remarks, which has to do with the proposition of the Minister of National Defence that the majority of the young men who are serving in the armed forces are 100 per cent behind his proposal. Although this might be a true and realistic factor in the experience of those who live two generations from now, it is not quite factually representative of the situation today.

To bear this out, Mr. Chairman, I want to quote very briefly from a lengthy brief prepared by seven officers who call themselves junior naval officers, which I understand includes ranks from lieutenant commander, down. One pertinent paragraph from this brief is as follows:

It seems to us that people will always have to go to sea. The future will still require our specialized expertise. To destroy for no sensible reason all that goes with this expertise and which is valuable and good is difficult to understand. So many of the things which the minister wishes to do away with are the outward and visible signs of a way of life, and are very important factors which contribute to a happy and efficient fighting force.

Personally, we are not at all happy about what is in store. We can see no benefits, no reason behind unification. We are told that we are to have broader career opportunities; General Allard tells us that before the end of the year he will outline for us a new career pattern which will make us "very happy". But we don't want a new career plan or broader opportunities. We don't want to hold down an administrative job in Winnipeg, or to be employed in some general job in Gagetown, or to be executive assistant to, say, the Commander of Materiel Command. Our present careers at sea and associated with ships are broad enough now. We have plenty to do to keep up with the challenges of our seagoing profession, and to learn all that we still have to learn about the business of going to sea. When we are older and much more senior, and when we have accomplished all we can in the seagoing profession, then we would be delighted to fill some responsible senior position in an integrated headquarters staff.

In the meantime, we ask nothing more than the challenging and demanding life we now lead. We wish to continue to go to sea in Her Majesty's ships in Canada's service, being, and looking like naval officers.

When it is not necessary to change it is necessary not to change.

In closing I should like to suggest that while these views are those of young serving naval officers, they do indeed reflect the views of many other young serving officers in both the army and in the air force. I must say that the air force officers are affected to a lesser degree, because to the men who fly aeroplanes, this is their whole life. They live in a small, compact world. The number of pilots in the air force compared with the number of men who keep them in the air is very small and they have their own world. Nothing is going effectively to change that.

The Chairman: Order. I must now advise the hon. member that the time allotted to him has expired.

Mr. Forrestall: I thank the committee for its indulgence.

Mr. Coates: Mr. Chairman, it would appear that the government does not want the advice of the hon. member for Halifax, and this is an indication on the part of the government that it does not want any advice at any time on our defence policy. We are told that the policy of the government has no real or serious critics; that it is the kind of policy the Canadian people want. At the same time the minister tells us that he does not want the matter discussed before the defence committee until after he has secured second reading and approval in principle of the bill.

As this debate goes on and on and on it becomes more and more obvious that the government has placed parliament on a collision course. According to indications given both yesterday and today the minister appears to have won his battle in his party and has convinced the backbenchers that his stubbornness is justified: They will go with him to the end.

As I have told the minister, Mr. Chairman, there is just as much stubbornness among the members of the official opposition. The other thing that we have on our side is reasonableness. What we ask for is reasonable. What the government is doing today and what it will be doing in the days ahead is unreasonable. It is even more than unreasonable; it is downright stupid. As a result of what we are doing a general election campaign could ensue. Nobody in the country wants a general election, so this is a pretty serious state of affairs. I would have thought that the last people who wanted an election were the members of the government, because no government would have more sins to answer for than the present one, if they had to face the