

*National Defence Act Amendment*

the pages run around as we started to discuss the bill and distribute No. 37 of the minutes of proceedings of the committee containing, not in one group, the amendments that were being proposed by the government to the bill they had before the house amending the National Defence Act. So we now have a bill which amends a bill which amends a bill. What a way to run an operation. This is what I complain about now; this is what I complained about the other day in respect of the hon. member for Lapointe.

*[Translation]*

But, had I spoken in French, I suppose that I would have been granted what I am asking today and that the debate would have been postponed until tomorrow. I find this an unacceptable principle. In fact, it was unacceptable the other day. And hon. members opposite supported the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire) when he asked for parts of the minutes of proceedings and evidence of committees. But today, no, that is not necessary. Why? Is there any difference, whether it is the hon. member for Lapointe or a member on this side of the house who asks for all the minutes of proceedings and evidence before we come to a decision? None at all. Other items are on the order paper. The Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Marchand) is most eager to have his bills examined. But no, it is rank obstinacy to want to take this bill now because, whether it is examined tomorrow or the day after, it may not be implemented fully before nine years, according to the minister. Why be so eager then and so impatient to proceed today with the debate on this bill?

I therefore point out now that this is a question of principle. I wish to stress that point this afternoon as I will tomorrow and in the future. I hope that when they develop the committee system, hon. members will observe established principles.

● (5:40 p.m.)

*[English]*

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, I also want to take exception to the attributing to some of my colleagues and myself of rather ulterior motives in our opposition to this bill, and attributed by a man who should know better and who should keep his mouth shut. I refer to the chief of the defence staff. There is as much right in the chief of the defence staff to say what he has about the hon. member for Calgary North, the hon. member for Winnipeg

[Mr. Lambert.]

South Centre and perhaps myself as there is in me to say of him that he is a great advocate of unification because it helps his career. You would say, Mr. Chairman, that that statement might be unfair. It is just as unfair for the chief of the defence staff to say what he has. The sooner he keeps his mouth shut on matters of this kind, the better it will be, and I will say that to him directly if I get the opportunity.

I was rather amused by a headline which appeared in one of the morning papers to the effect that there might be more heat than light during this debate. There was a long critique about how the committee proceeded. Some people who do not attend committee meetings very frequently have a lot to say about what goes on at such meetings. They really are unaware of some of the difficulties of the mechanics of the matter. At such committees hon. members from all parties in the house have a right to ask questions and they do, and there must inevitably be some repetition. Then there is repetition, of course, by various witnesses.

However, some of these people to whom I refer have perhaps not experienced a trial which tries to establish the truth where from a great deal of evidence you try to come to a consensus, to a point where you can form a judgment. Once these people to whom I refer have made up their minds, anything to the contrary becomes in their view rather more heat than light. After all, those who hold a contrary view are not enlightened in their mind.

As I say, hon. members on all sides participated in the proceedings of the committee. Certainly government members participated and did so because, as I said before, they are putting their case for a change before parliament and the country. They must put forward their case. Let them analyse the evidence, Mr. Chairman. Let them discuss the evidence given by four branch heads out of five who say no to unification today. Some of them directly and outrightly oppose it; others said, "Do not do it now." Other senior officers whose capabilities, abilities and military knowledge far surpass ours, including those of the minister, tell us, Mr. Chairman, that we are going down the wrong route.

There is a good reason why this whole question got off on the wrong foot. It got off on the wrong foot last June when we were starting to discuss the question of integration and the progress that had been made, and