

National Defence Act Amendment

suggestion is correct, but it looks as if it may be. I hope it is not, but future events will show whether it is or whether it is not.

In conclusion may I say this: The Royal Canadian Navy has had a long and great tradition. The hon. member for Halifax dealt with it and I will not repeat what he said. For some of us in this house who see the navy being obliterated this is a sad moment. I never thought, during the years I served in that force, that I should see the day when this parliament would destroy it, wiping out its traditions and record. I am sorry to have to be here at this time, and I can only hope that the future may bring some changes.

Mr. Winch: My remarks on clause 5 will be brief. I spoke on this clause during the debate on second reading, in the defence committee hearings, and subsequently when the bill was referred back to the committee of the whole house. Because of the implications contained in clause 5 I find it necessary to emphasize something to which the minister has not paid proper attention.

Let me say at the outset that I have no objection basically, after planning, testing and readjustment, to integration culminating, in unification of the three services. If we do amalgamate our three services into a single service, surely no one will argue that in that single service we shall not have an army, a navy and an air force. I cannot conceive of any form of Canadian armed service not containing an army, a navy and an air force.

● (4:20 p.m.)

With integration going forward toward a single service, can the minister explain to me why, without destroying the single service concept, it is not possible to retain the Royal Canadian Navy as a unit of the single service, the Royal Canadian Air Force as a unit or element of the single service, and the Army as a unit or element of the single service? I have used those terms "unit" and "element" because they appear in clause 5.

To my way of thinking, preservation of the names "Royal Canadian Navy", "Royal Canadian Air Force" and "Army" would in no way prevent a reasonable minister arriving at an efficient realization of the principle of integration or its culmination in a single service. It would not even interfere with his computers.

Because the maintenance of a name means so much and because the traditions and the honours and victories mean so much, why is it necessary to be so adamant in saying that

[Mr. Nesbitt.]

the name will have to go. It does not make sense. It certainly is not common sense for a minister who wishes to get so complex and far-reaching a bill as this through the House of Commons.

I have been a member of the defence committee ever since it was established. As far as possible I have attended every meeting of that committee. I think it would be reasonable, just and commendable for the minister of defence to consider the principle which I am trying to espouse and expand. You can have your principle of a single service—but without wiping out and destroying that which means so much to thousands of our people who have served and who are serving in the navy, in the air force and in the army.

If the minister can assure me that the meaning of the words in the third line of the first subclause of clause 5, namely, "are embodied in the Canadian Forces" is that we can have, as units or elements, the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Army, I shall vote for clause 5. But if I do not receive this assurance I shall have no hesitation about voting against clause 5 as it is now.

Mr. McIntosh: I hope the minister will pay some heed to the plea just made by the hon. member for Vancouver East. However, I doubt very much whether notice will be taken of any plea made by a member of the opposition. This was clearly demonstrated a few minutes ago when we asked for the deletion of a certain word, "indefinite", which the judge advocate general said was inconsequential and without great importance. The plea made by the hon. member will almost certainly fall upon deaf ears. Indeed I doubt very much whether the minister even heard it.

We in the opposition refer to clause 5 as the compulsory transfer clause. When members of the present armed forces joined that force, they joined either the navy, the army or the air force. That was the agreement they made. The hon. member for Queens has referred to the contract entered into by members of the present forces. They joined a particular service. By a stroke of the pen this government intends to wipe out that service. I am not a lawyer so I am not prepared to say whether this clause is ultra vires. The passing of the bill will mean that those who have entered into a contract to serve in the army, the navy or the air force are now compelled to serve in