

National Defence Act Amendment

● (5:30 p.m.)

If hon. members will give Bill C-243 second reading and allow the defence committee to study it in depth, clause by clause, and come to conclusions in a democratic manner, parliament and Canada will benefit greatly. Let us hear these specialists in military matters who have been quoted from both sides of the house where their words will have meaning, before the standing committee on national defence.

Mr. Terence Nugent (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be following the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. McNulty) in this debate and I hope the hon. member for Victoria (B.C.) (Mr. Groos) is still in the house because I would like to make a comment or two about his contribution to the debate. I thought the question asked of the hon. member for Lincoln put most of his speech into focus. He quoted at great length from General Foulkes' opinion of several years ago, but his answer indicated that he realizes that the general has now changed his opinion. But this did not stop the typical Liberal approach of putting on the record what they hope they may find useful and quoting someone whether or not the quotation is reliable.

I thought the suggestion the hon. member put forward was so much like the attitude of the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer): Let us get this bill out of the house and into committee so we can get at the facts and allay everybody's fears. It was very nicely put by the hon. member. But, of course, he did not bother to mention that since the question to be decided is the principle of unification, once the vote is taken the house has decided on the question and therefore there is no right for the committee to call evidence as to the principle of unification. It would then be useless to go to the committee to get answers to all these questions.

Of course, all this has been said before in the house. The same objections have been taken and we have received the same bland assurances. The frustrating part of it is that the minister can sit there very contented that he has been successful in the snow job he has been doing on the Canadian people as to what is at issue in this defence debate. Frankly, the situation is that this house is demanding information and the minister says: Ha, ha; I do not have to give you any and I am getting away with it.

There was an article in the *Globe and Mail* this morning on the same subject as the objection raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) with regard to the activities behind the press gallery. The minister has his high-priced and very successful hucksters up there riding herd on every word said. They are making sure that if anything embarrassing to the minister is said in the house they can descend on the press gallery and divert the attention of its members should they show any signs of thinking seriously about something which may be objectionable to the minister. His minions disseminate with the greatest vigour what the minister would like said about him and what will enhance his image.

Our principal objection to unification, our principal complaint, is that for the first time in Canada's history there is only one important element in the mind of the defence minister, namely, to sell his own image and to gain the political benefits which can be obtained from building himself up. I suggest that the minister is playing fast and loose with the security of Canada and with millions and millions of the taxpayers' dollars. His prime purpose is to ensure his own greatness.

I was amazed to hear the hon. member for Victoria (B.C.) (Mr. Groos), who is chairman of the defence committee, compliment the minister on the way in which he has presented the bill to the house. As a matter of fact I was shocked. The chairman of the defence committee was aware before anyone else in the house of the minister's methods to ensure that parliament would grant the funds for his program. The chairman of the defence committee was aware, before I was or anyone else on this side of the house, of the fact that the minister had tampered with the evidence before that committee. The hon. member for Victoria, B.C., said that the minister had acted in the same democratic manner which has been followed for 400 years. What nonsense. This is the first time that parliament has ever been so affronted by any minister of the crown. It is the first time that a member belonging to the same party as a minister who has so insulted this house has suggested that he will slavishly follow and support him in continuing to insult the house. The minister is guilty of tampering with evidence and he has done so for the purpose of ensuring that parliament does not get the information which is essential before it can decide on