

*National Defence Act Amendment*

appearing before the court, who must submit all relevant information. Since the onus of proof lies with the petitioner, as with the minister who brings a piece of legislation before the house, we must know about all the elements likely to enlighten us as to the merits of this bill.

We often wonder whether the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer) is really the author of the bill. He never said so very clearly. We do think that he was informed by his department officials but we would be interested to know who is really the author, who was the mind, the brain behind Bill No. C-243 and who built the structure now before us.

Hon. members opposite hold us responsible for the delay in passing the bill. Therefore, I take the liberty to make a suggestion to the Minister of National Defence, as well as members of the government. If they want this bill passed as soon as possible, they should tell the minister to give at once a clear answer to the important questions which we, on the opposite side, have asked him on several occasions, during this debate.

For instance, we have asked him this question: Why did 40 odd senior officers of the army, navy and air force say "no" to unification?

● (5:30 p.m.)

We had, of course, the privilege and opportunity to read the evidence of those officers when they appeared before the committee on national defence, but we would like to know why some 40 senior officers who had not yet reached the age of retirement have chosen to retire prematurely rather than to follow implicitly the views and ideas set forth by the Minister of National Defence on unification.

In one case at least, the minister has shown no patience with his senior officers, has not respected, in my opinion, their freedom of speech and has even contributed to their premature retirement.

I feel that some very important matters have been raised in the house concerning our commitments to NATO. We all know that our commitments to NATO are of a military nature, just as we know that the member states of NATO are going through a deep crisis at present. We are also aware that since the French government demanded that the military forces of NATO member states leave French territory, this organization has been undergoing a complete military overhaul,

since it is first of all a defence organization against possible aggression by the other block.

Now, since we are members of this international organization, it would be a good thing to know whether the minister has consulted the military leaders of those other countries which adhere to NATO, in order to find out how this unified force which is being considered for Canada may serve efficiently within the framework of this international body.

Naturally, the ministers of the crown do not agree on this question. The Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin) told the house in a long speech that the unification of the armed forces did not change in any way our undertakings with regard to NATO.

On the other hand, the minister also seemed to say in a speech that the unification of the armed forces concerned only the United Nations forces. I think that these two ministers of the crown, who hold very important portfolios, should agree on our undertakings with regard to NATO, so as to determine whether the unification of the armed forces will be prejudicial to these undertakings and whether we should instead assume other responsibilities, so that the unification of our armed forces may be adapted to the present NATO defence system for our mutual defence.

We have also commitments to NORAD; unless I am mistaken, the NORAD treaty was signed in 1963. That treaty provides for the joint defence of the territories of Canada and the United States respectively. We would therefore like to learn from the minister whether the unification of our armed forces involves a revision of our commitments to NORAD.

I believe that those questions are most important, because we cannot state, from a military point of view, that we might proceed alone; here on the North American continent, as far as territorial defence is concerned, we are bound by the NORAD treaty, and at the international level, we are a member country of NATO.

So the minister should tell us whether that aspect of the question was looked at and whether our commitments to NATO and NORAD will have to be re-evaluated in the light of this new proposed legislation, namely the unification of our armed forces.

Obviously the minister will have to prove, as I said at the start, that the unification of the armed forces will also be effective for our military men who will have to serve in NATO as well as in NORAD.