

National Defence Act Amendment

had almost universal support. He had the support of the armed forces, the general public and the members of this house. I think everyone realized, certainly anyone who had been a member of the armed forces or who was interested in the minister's proposals, that waste and duplication were rampant in the armed forces. Everyone supported the idea of trying to achieve a little more efficiency in the services in order that the Canadian people could receive a little more value for their defence dollars.

• (4:30 p.m.)

The minister, Mr. Speaker, having had this great and wonderful opportunity, has muffed it. Somehow he has lost the good will that he had when he first made these proposals. He has lost the good will of the forces, he has lost the good will of the public and certainly he has lost the good will of the members of this house.

I think the reasons for his loss of good will in this house are quite obvious. We saw another example today during the question period. The minister seems to be completely unable to resist any opportunity to display arrogance and rudeness. The minister has been a member of the house long enough to know that this is not the way to get the co-operation of other hon. members. That is not the way for a minister to get his legislation through. Regardless of how great the temptation or how much his ire may be aroused, the minister's attitude is not the way to accomplish things. The minister's whole attitude in the debate on this issue reminds me of nothing more than a frustrated corporal who, because of the death of some grandparent, has inherited the office of commander in chief and ever since has behaved like a bull in a china shop, seeming to love the sound of breaking glass.

There are some people who say—I do not know whether this is true—that the prime motivation for this attitude is to try to show the Canadian people that, contrary to the present leader of the Liberal party, the minister is a man of strength and determination. Anybody who has started out on a project of this kind with the complete support of everyone but winds up without the support of anyone would make a very good leader of the Liberal party.

The reason the minister is losing the support of the armed forces is again, I think, quite easy to understand. I have with me an example, a letter received from a member of

the armed forces serving in the Gaza Strip. I should like to read two paragraphs. He says:

I do not see why the single man must pay for rations that are supplied from world powers. We do not receive any Canadian rations here and Canada only subsidizes an 8-cent grant per man. I'm willing to pay \$2.40 per month but not \$35 per month.

If you can answer this question it would be appreciated and if Canada wants us to pay \$35 a month let them send us good Canadian rations for a change. The food here is not worth \$35 a month.

That is one of the reasons that the armed forces are becoming so fed up with the present minister. Another major reason for the minister's loss of the support of the forces is the confusion which is being caused throughout the armed forces as well as throughout the country. This confusion is rampant. For example, I have before me a few newspaper clippings dealing with the recent well-publicized pay raise given to the members of the armed forces, and they are quite interesting. On September 24 there was a story by Neville Hamilton of the *Journal* headlined "Armed Forces Pay Bonanza May Reach 30 Per Cent". Three days later, in the *Ottawa Journal* for September 27, there was a headline reading: "Forces' Boost 14 Per Cent". On the same day the headline of a story by John Walker in another newspaper was: "Forces' Boost Cut—Now 10 Per Cent". Two days later the following headlines appeared in two newspapers both printed in the same city. First, a story by Norman Campbell was headlined: "14 Per Cent Average. Forces Pay Increase Puts Stress On Skill". Second, a story by Dick Jackson was headlined: "Increases Average 10 Per Cent. New Pay Deal For Forces".

I do not believe that there is a conspiracy afoot among newspapermen to try to confuse the Canadian public. I think that these newspaper reporters were trying very hard to do an adequate job. I believe that they, like the house, the armed forces, the minister and all his officials, are completely confused about this whole situation. No one seems to know where he is going, what he is doing, what he can look forward to, what to expect, or anything else.

I have talked to ex-servicemen recently returned from Germany who told me that six months prior to their return they had every intention of signing on for another five years but that because of the confusion brought about in the forces over the past six months they cannot wait to get out of uniform. This they did as promptly as they could and returned to civvy street. If it were possible for