

National Defence Act Amendment

I am as anxious as anyone else to proceed to an intelligent discussion of this matter. I have not passed observations on the unintelligent press reporting of the unification evidence, or the evidence on unification that the minister has. I shall refer to that later. I do say, however—and I spoke to the government house leader about this briefly early today—that to proceed with this item the evidence must be available to us. I say that hon. members of this house are entitled to that evidence. It is not a case of saying “Oh, well, it will be presented.” We need that evidence to work on this legislation.

I suggest that Beauchesne makes certain references which imply that all the evidence shall be before the house when the matter is being discussed. In any event the evidence must be before hon. members, and it should not be presented merely at 2.30. To do that is contemptuous and frankly contemptible. Second, I put it to Your Honour that it is mandatory that the committee report embodying the amendments be printed in *Votes and Proceedings* before we can proceed to study the bill as amended.

If Your Honour will look at citation 318 on page 248 of Beauchesne's fourth edition, the paragraph dealing with the report by the chairman or member of a committee, Your Honour will find these words:

If it is long, the house generally dispenses with the reading, as all reports are printed in the *Votes and Proceedings* for the information of members as soon as they are laid before the house.

I am concerned not only with members of the defence committee—and the acquaintance of some hon. members on the other side with that committee was short enough—I am concerned with all members in the house. They must have the contents of the report before proceeding on it. That report was tabled at approximately 2.45 p.m. this afternoon, and I put it to Your Honour that that is not complying with the rules and practice of this house. The house having received the report, it may read it in *Votes and Proceedings* for today, and at the appropriate time proceed with the discussion of the bill.

I have raised these points because more and more with the evolution of the committee system in dealing with legislation, it will be absolutely mandatory that this house have the committee evidence before it, that it may properly consider the bill clause by clause. I therefore seek the co-operation of the leader of the house on the government side to turn to other business that we may complete these

[Mr. Lambert.]

administrative details and allow hon. members to be properly prepared for this debate.

Hon. G. J. McIlraith (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I am always desirous of co-operating with hon. members, particularly when that will expedite the business of the house. I followed citation 318 (1) closely when the hon. member read it. It is interesting to note that it does not provide any requirement for the printing of the report in *Votes and Proceedings*. It does make reference to the information being available to hon. members.

Mr. Lambert: That is nonsense at this stage.

Mr. McIlraith: Information is made available to hon. members in the report of the committee and the evidence. The evidence has been printed in both English and French and has been distributed, and the sixth report containing the amendments made by the standing committee is to be found on page 2387 of minutes of proceedings No. 37 of the standing committee. That has been distributed.

• (3:30 p.m.)

Mr. Lambert: Will the minister say when that was distributed?

Mr. McIlraith: If I might just finish my remarks—

Mr. Lambert: When was it distributed?

Mr. McIlraith: I think the hon. gentleman should have learned by now that in this house members other than himself are entitled to speak and that a little courtesy such as is extended to him when he speaks should be extended in return. I said when he asked his question that I would be glad to deal with that point. As I was about to say before I was interrupted, the bill itself, as reprinted by order of the standing committee of which the hon. member was a member, is in the binder of bills. So not only do hon. members have the bill as originally submitted to the House of Commons but they have the reprint of the bill as ordered to be reprinted by the standing committee which dealt with it. In the sixth report of the committee they also have the amendments in isolation. So it is very easy for hon. members to know precisely what clauses have been amended and what the amendments are.

The hon. member asked me when the evidence was delivered. He was kind enough to call me this morning about noon to say it had