

National Defence Act Amendment

Two policies, one for one part of the country, and another for the other part, according to the votes that could be gained for the Liberal party.

Well, Mr. Chairman, all those things have been prejudicial to Canadian unity and have given rise in the mind of Canadians to the idea that Quebeckers were not willing to assume their share of responsibility for the defence of the country.

The facts are the opposite, and I am happy to point out that during the 1914-18 war as well as during the 1939-45 war, Quebeckers fulfilled their duties.

Mr. Chairman, to conclude, I would like to appeal to the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer). I want to tell him that he is wrong in not accepting the advice of experts on defence, and urge him to reconsider his position.

I know that he is anxious to discharge his duties but if he really wants to serve the country, he will have to accept the advice of the admirals, the rear admirals and all those who try to talk him out of his project. If the minister continues on his course, then the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) will have to take the matter in hand and simply withdraw this bill, so that we may have more time to study it and obtain the information which we need to enlighten our constituents.

I think that the hon. minister should think it over and not rush on with this, because the decision he is making now will certainly be against the best interests of the country.

● (9:40 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether I could be so bold as to place before the committee once again the suggestion which I made last Friday morning, as set out in *Hansard* at pages 14925 and 14926. My proposal then—and I offer it again now—was to the effect that we agree some time soon, possibly tonight or tomorrow, to let clause 2 stand and go on to some of the other clauses of this bill. May I make it very clear, Mr. Chairman, that I am not trying to close off debate on clause 2. I am not suggesting that a vote be taken at this time. Indeed, if we let the clause stand it will not have been passed until we come back to it at some later stage of our proceedings.

I am positive that my suggestion does not prejudice the work of the business committee. I happen to be one of the members of that committee; therefore, I shall not report on

[Mr. Ricard.]

what it is doing. But I am sure that if we were to go on from clause 2 to other clauses, that would not clash with anything which the committee might report or fail to report.

I should like also to make it clear that my proposal should be considered as one which does not seek to strengthen the position of either the government or the opposition in this debate. I put it forward because it seems to me that at some point members will want to discuss other clauses. There has been a suggestion of that in the speech made by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot who found himself discussing clause 6 of the bill; I believe this is one of the clauses which a number of hon. members wish to debate at considerable length.

And I said, my proposal does not strengthen the position of either side; it simply makes sure that whatever time we do spend on this bill we will divide among clause 2 and the other clauses in which hon. members are interested. I plead with the government not to bring in my suggestion in the form of a motion. I hope this is something we may agree on. It will not make sense if we spend all our time on clause 2 and then, because of the application of a rule, or whatever else may happen, the committee has to let the other clauses go by without debate. On Friday morning I thought Monday night would be a good time at which to agree to this course. That is why I have been bold enough to take the floor at this point in the debate, hoping that hon. members will consider what I had to say.

Incidentally, if there are members who feel they have anything to say which relates to clause 2 and which has not yet been said—I make no comment on that—it seems to me there are other clauses which are just as general as clause 2. For example, clause 5 states that the services now known as the three we have shall be embodied in the new single force. Surely this clause is wide enough for any discussion or for any contribution members may want to make.

I offer this suggestion in good faith. I do so without taking sides as between the two main contending groups at the present time. I do so in the hope that whatever time we spend on this bill we may apportion reasonably as among the various clauses. That is my proposal, that either tonight or some time tomorrow we agree to allow clause 2 to stand, without voting on it, and go on to clauses 3, 4, 5, and 6 as the committee might wish.