

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

result from re-enlistment on other than a free basis. These men should be free to make this decision because in their minds and in mine such action by this government would be tantamount to nothing less than conscription. The men in the armed forces are really concerned about this. The minister must demonstrate to them that integration will in fact bear out his two premises, first that it will bring about a more efficient armed force, and second that it will save money, which money the minister has indicated could be converted into capital equipment.

The minister must—and again this is a point that has been stressed in hundreds of communications—restore to the services the respect due to the office he holds. He must somehow use every force at his disposal to allay the growing fear and suspicion—and it is a voiced suspicion—that he is bent on pursuing a political course and not a defence one. He must permit those of us in the defence committee to conduct a detailed examination of the progress of full integration and unification to date. The men in the armed services are entitled to such an examination prior to the introduction in this house of legislation leading to integration and unification.

We were denied the opportunity to deal with the effects of integration because of the abandonment of the defence committee hearings some two weeks prior to the adjournment of the house. I might add that this action took place against the expressed wish of the steering committee of the defence committee.

I ask the minister, as I tried to do earlier in the house today, whether he will now advise the members of the house and the people of Canada, particularly those serving in the armed forces, when he will reconvene the defence committee and place before it the question of integration as it has taken place in the armed forces to date. I cannot stress the gravity and urgency that goes hand in hand with this decision.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if the first piece of business to be handed to the defence committee this fall is the legislation dealing with integration, the minister will not be able to stop the flood of mail. I also suggest to him that the opinions expressed in this mail will be strongly reversed. I believe it is quite easy to understand why these men are reluctant to express their real and heartfelt feelings about the lack of communication with regard to integration, their loss of identity, and so on. These are meaningful things to the men in

the armed forces. Very few of them—and I admit this—are opposed to integration in some form, to some extent. If the minister had not dealt in such a pragmatic way with such a vital area of concern I think he could have achieved the full support of the services.

● (10:20 p.m.)

Today he certainly does not enjoy the full support of the men serving in the Royal Canadian Navy. One of the ways in which he can achieve this is to start telling them what is taking place, why it is taking place, and to demonstrate to them that his premises are accurate. I do not believe them to be accurate and I believe that the sooner this matter is put before the defence committee for a proper and adequate hearing, the better.

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence): I am surprised, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Forrestall) has the temerity to stand in his place and to say that the standing committee on defence was denied the opportunity to investigate the results of the integration processes today. They met for weeks and that was precisely what they did consider. At meeting after meeting, the commanders from the various commands expressed what the integration process had meant in terms of their command, the progress that had been made to date, the savings that had been made, and the savings and advantages which were anticipated in the future. My hon. friend should have asked his party to put him on that committee. I doubt that even yet he has read the evidence of all those meetings at which the commanders were present and at which they gave this report for which he is asking.

Mr. Lambert: There is nothing after June 22.

Mr. Hellyer: This was a full and complete report which by and large satisfied the committee that great progress had been made, that the integration plan has been implemented well so far, that it is on schedule, and that there are real advantages, both from the military standpoint and from the standpoint of saving the taxpayers of this country a great deal of money.

In reply to his suggestion or charge that this is a political operation I should remind him that this policy was laid down as government policy, as the policy of the government of the day, in a white paper presented in March, 1964. The reasons for the reorganization were given there. It was stated that the reorganization would commence with the integration at the headquarters and that this