

*National Defence*

the committee who were very well qualified, most efficient, and had all the answers at their fingertips. The dispatch with which the bill went through the committee was due largely to these men from the navy, army and air force who came before the committee with a bill which they had drafted themselves and which they thoroughly understood. Each one accepted the responsibility in his own field. If amendments were suggested that were not considered reasonable, our minds were soon clarified.

As we consider the bill section by section there may be other matters that I shall deal with, but, I repeat, it is about as good a job as could be done under the circumstances.

**Mr. Balcer:** Mr. Chairman, as a member of the committee I want to say that I think a real job was done with this bill. The work of this committee proves the necessity of having a committee on national defence, which would be to the advantage of the three services as well as to Canada as a whole. From the work of this committee we have seen that matters of national defence can be studied by cool heads and real progress made. I do not see that any argument can be offered against the setting up of a committee on national defence.

**Mr. Blackmore:** I had the privilege of representing the Social Credit group on this committee. First of all I should like to commend the chairman. I do not believe I have ever served under a finer chairman, and I doubt if I have ever served under as fine a chairman as the hon. member for Vancouver Centre. Considering the fact that this was his first experience, he deserves the highest praise.

One thing that was observable in connection with the work of the committee was the fine spirit of sincerity and objectivity which prevailed generally among the members. I found no member of the committee who was not prepared to listen to suggestions from other members and weigh them. Generally speaking the members would hold on until everybody came to a sort of unity of faith as a result of considering the opinions of others.

We were fortunate in having on the committee so many men with such wide experience. I mention the hon. member for Nanaimo as only one, and when I say that there were several members on the committee who seemed quite as much at home with matters concerning the fighting forces as that hon. member, it will be realized that we had a genuinely fine committee which rendered the best of service to our country.

We are not saying that the bill as it now stands is the acme of perfection, but I think

under the conditions under which we laboured it constitutes the finest contribution that we in our generation can make to a finer and better military service.

**Mr. Smith (Calgary West):** After listening to these paeans of praise I hesitate to say anything which might be regarded as a discordant note, particularly as I was not a member of the committee. There is a good reason for that. As I told the house on another occasion some years ago, my total military experience consisted of having been a lance-corporal in the boys' brigade of a Methodist church in Regina.

Ever since I came to Ottawa I have been interested in courts martial. I want someone to explain to me why in peacetime serious crimes are to be dealt with by courts martial within the armed services. I know that there is an amendment dealing with murder, rape and other crimes, and I know that the attorney general of any province may direct that the matter be tried in a civilian court on the basis that the civilian authorities must always be paramount. But I have yet to hear it satisfactorily explained why serious crimes such as robbery with violence, or armed robbery, things which are becoming too prevalent in this country, should be dealt with by courts martial. Why is it that the armed services insist on having what is practically exclusive jurisdiction in matters of that kind?

We must remember that in the administration of justice generally all prosecutions begin by the laying of what we call an information. Sometimes an investigation is carried out by the police or the protective authorities before an information is laid, but when a crime is openly committed no further investigation is needed before the laying of an information. What I have in my mind is this. We say that the attorney general may remove a case from service jurisdiction to a court; yet that seems to me to be a nebulous thing to say when civilian officers of the law have had no part in the investigation of what may result in a charge under military law or an information in our civilian courts.

I accept the word of hon. gentlemen who have spoken as to the excellent job that was done, but it does seem to me, if I am correctly informed as to what the law, even though amended, is, that the civilian court jurisdiction is practically ousted, except in cases of rape and murder; and there is one other which escapes my memory at the moment. Let us consider robbery with violence, or breaking and entering. When someone makes up his mind to break and enter a dwelling house, you often see violence. In