

National Defence Act Amendment

would be created which would not be in the interests of the forces and therefore could not be allowed. It is not likely to arise, but in the event that it did some new policy would have to be implemented at once.

This situation may be considered along the same lines as the way banks operate deposit accounts. From their experience they know that a certain number of people withdraw money on any given day. This is, basically, an acceptable point of view. If, of course, all depositors simultaneously want their money the system would not be viable and extraordinary measures would have to be implemented at once. Under these circumstances, Mr. Chairman, I believe we would prefer to have authority to follow either course. In other words, we should like to implement the recommendation of the minister's manpower study or, if in the long run that should prove not to be the best policy, to be able to revert to the previous one. This would give us more flexibility than if we were restricted merely to definite terms of engagement. I would prefer to have the legal authority to have a choice in so far as other ranks are concerned as we now have in so far as officers are concerned.

Mr. Harkness: I should like to ask the minister what advantages there are in having an indefinite term. As I said earlier, we did not receive any evidence in the committee with regard to any advantages in an indefinite term of service but received a great deal of evidence relating to the disadvantages. In view of the fact there is a potential danger in the provision, as the minister has admitted, I can see no good reason for including it. This is particularly true in view of the fact the regulations undoubtedly will be drawn up along the lines the minister has indicated. They will likely provide for six months' notice for a man to terminate his indefinite period, so the situation then becomes the same as with a fixed term. You would, in fact, have imbedded in the men's minds at least the idea that they have a right to give six months' notice and get out at any time.

The minister says that special measures might be taken in an emergency. However, if it happens that large numbers of people give notice at a time when there is no general emergency, and there are no emergency powers, I do not know what you are going to do about it. I think you are going to arrive at the point where you will not be able to put ships to sea or have communication units which can operate properly.

[Mr. Hellyer.]

Mr. Hellyer: You do not need emergency powers under these circumstances. The six months' provision is not included in the regulations; it is merely current policy which has been in effect for some time. In at least one case this policy has been altered and that is in respect of pilots. Perhaps I should leave any statement on the pilot situation until a little later. However, pilots are now required, with the exception of those who have been R.O.T.P. students, to serve a minimum of five years before the six months' notice provision comes into effect. This is for precisely the reason my hon. friend gives. Market conditions for pilots are so buoyant and there is so much opportunity for alternative employment that we require them to serve the minimum period of time to justify the expense of training them.

I do not believe my hon. friend's concern is one which is too serious. He asked what the advantages were in having this choice. I think the advantage is that the men would have the same security as the officers now have. They would know, once they had passed the initial stage of their careers, once they had completed their apprenticeship, that they would be accepted as career soldiers. Just as with the officers with permanent commissions, these men would know that barring misconduct or some other serious offence, some very major contraction in the size of the forces or something of that nature, they would have the security of continuous employment throughout their military career. This would give them a sense of security that they do not have with the fixed term engagement.

• (12:20 p.m.)

We also know from experience that this does make a difference. We have gone through this with the pilots and navigators. We found that short service commissions gave them a feeling of insecurity because they did not know in advance whether they would be offered a new term of engagement at the end of their present term. Thus they had no security in that they did not know after the second term whether they would get a third. A certain doubt was created in their minds and as a result they decided it would be preferable to take civilian employment rather than face the uncertainty of being given an additional short term of military service. This did become quite an important factor psychologically, particularly after the release of some short service air crew. For that reason all pilots are now taken on on a permanent commission basis.