

National Defence Act Amendment

consequential items commencing with clause 8? The committee then could return to the substantive clauses once the consequential and general clauses had been dealt with. I realize that all clauses were examined in detail by the standing committee on national defence and it may be the opinion of this committee that it is not necessary to repeat in full the discussion here. It might be preferable, however, if hon. members would agree, to proceed to clause 8 at this time and consider the clauses which are not too controversial. This would allow us to spend all the remaining time on the substantive clauses in part I of the bill.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Chairman, this suggestion by the minister comes rather late in the day. If the minister had accepted the first reasonable proposal which I put forward about four times that we stand clauses 2 and 6 until next fall, this would have made some sense. I am surprised that he is not now prepared to do that. In fact when he got up to speak earlier that is what I thought he was going to say. In view of the unrest in the services and in view of the difference of opinion which exists across the country with regard to this bill the suggestion I put forward appears to be more and more reasonable each day. This would not interfere at all with the process of drafting the regulations.

I do not wish to impute motives to the minister, but the suggestion he has made this afternoon conceivably could prevent or curtail discussion of clauses 6 and 7 which are vital to the bill. We might find ourselves taking up time on the inconsequential clauses which are in part II. Our preference is to continue now with clause 6 which is one of the vital clauses in the bill. Much as I should like to agree with the Minister of National Defence, who never agrees with me, I have to reject his suggestion as unsound.

Some hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Churchill: Oh, no. I have just said that this is one of the vital clauses in the bill and I propose to move an amendment to improve it.

• (3:10 p.m.)

The first part of clause 6 reads as follows:

Officers and men who were members of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army or the Royal Canadian Air Force immediately prior to the coming into force of this Part are, subject to the provisions of the National Defence Act, members of the Canadian Forces.

This is one of the compulsory features which have been introduced into this bill. As

[Mr. Hellyer.]

soon as it becomes law the members of the navy, army and air force will be shifted into forces to be known as the Canadian Forces. We discussed this during defence committee hearings, and I think it would be worth while to re-emphasize the subject of those discussions at this time, because there are many more members present to give it their attention.

During the committee hearings I moved two amendments to this clause, which were voted down in the normal fashion by Liberal members voting against any of our proposals. I intend to put those proposals before the committee of the whole house in order that it may decide whether or not they are valuable.

Clause 6 introduces a compulsory feature. Men who are now in the three services are all volunteers. When they enlisted, whether it was last year or five, 15 or 20 years ago, they made a definite choice. They had the opportunity, wishing to serve their country, to become members of the army, the navy or the air force. Each officer and man made a deliberate choice as to the service in which he wished to devote some part of his life. Some of them deliberately chose a service in which to make a lifetime career. The government through this bill now intends to shift those officers and men from these three services into the Canadian Forces. The names of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian Army will disappear.

These officers and men who chose to make a contribution to Canada as members of one of the three services will no longer have this choice. They will be shifted into the Canadian Forces and will no longer be able to take pride as members of the navy, army or air force. The government is now saying that they are now in the services and will remain as members of the renamed service without any choice in the matter.

I gave an example of what happened in the past during the committee hearings and I should like to repeat it on this occasion. It is drawn from the experience of September, 1939. On September 1, 1939 officers and men were attested, enlisted, and sworn into the Canadian field force. I speak from practical knowledge because I was acting as assistant to the adjutant of our regiment on that occasion. These officers and men became members of the Canadian field force. Within a short period of time the cabinet at Ottawa changed the name to the Canadian active service