

*National Defence Act Amendment*

have long taken the position that certain adjustments should be made within our armed forces. His words on that occasion were:

We ought to redesign Canada's defence strategy and military forces to eliminate useless expenditures on forms of defence obsolete in the light of modern circumstances.

This is even more important. We should, he said—

—concentrate on establishing powerful, well-equipped, highly mobile forces strategically deployed and capable of immediate airborne transport to any area of Canada.

This was contained in a policy statement we issued several years ago. Having regard to the passage of time, I think the last part of that statement should now read—"capable of immediate airborne transport to any area of the world." So this concept is not new. It is not something we have very recently discovered. The bill before us represents in some respects the culmination of this idea; we are reaching the point at which action is to be taken in a direction we advocated a long time ago. It seems to me that for the purpose of fulfilling a role as a peace keeper in the world, a unified and integrated force would be more effective than three separate forces.

Nevertheless, I believe we should move rather slowly in the field of unification and integration. Sometimes I am puzzled about the interpretation of those two words as they are defined by various hon. members. If integration has already been achieved, and if all this bill will do is provide for unification, I am afraid I do not follow the argument. However this may be, it seems there is some reason and logic in having a single service under a single command if we are to provide the kind of force I have tried to describe. In the initial stages, at least, there has to be a higher degree of co-ordination between the services than we have now. Earlier this afternoon the minister suggested there were some deficiencies in co-ordination among the three forces we have at the present time. It is understandable that this should be so, whether or not one is intimately familiar with the organization of the armed forces.

So we agree to the concept of Canada's new role in international affairs, and we can find some measure of agreement upon integration, and even unification, up to a point. But I suggest to the minister that for the sake of morale we should not lose some of the very useful parts within our forces, and that we should go a little bit slowly in trying to set up

[Mr. Olson.]

a completely new structure. There are traditions in the Canadian forces that are proud and glorious, and rightly so. We should move very slowly, to make sure that no attempt, or apparent attempt is made to destroy these traditions or take away from the proud history of Canada's armed forces.

● (8:40 p.m.)

I am not suggesting to the minister that he is deliberately setting out to destroy such traditions, but accusations have been made that he is. If we move slowly, as I have suggested, and as my colleague from Fraser Valley suggested several weeks ago, we can make sure of providing a clear concept in the minds of all the men in the armed forces as to where we are going, and our purpose can then be achieved without too much pain.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I suggest to the minister and to the government house leader that public debate, and debate in the House of Commons on integration and unification of the armed forces have gone on just about long enough. I do not believe that anything useful is going to come, from here on out. The defence committee accepted a lot of amendments to the bill. No doubt representations were made to the minister and the department about other amendments.

I know there are those in this house and in other places who are hard and fast in their opposition to the provisions of the reprinted bill, but I believe we reach a point, and I think we have reached it, where nothing further of great usefulness can come out of extending the debate. I suggest to the minister that he get together with the house leader, look at the provisions of provisional standing order 15-A, and invoke some of them if this debate evolves into what appears to be developing, namely some kind of filibuster, the wasting of time to achieve certain things.

In my opinion the provisions of standing order 15-A are not too severe. Subsection 2 states:

During routine proceedings a minister of the crown may propose that the question of allocation of time for any item of business, unless otherwise provided for, be referred to the business committee, and upon such proposal being made that question shall stand referred to the committee.

Although I was not in Ottawa at the time, I have heard that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre supported that there ought to be some discussion at least with respect to limitation of time on this debate, if there are members of the house who are determined that it is going to become an interminable debate.