

*National Defence*

Bill No. 133 is the largest single bill put before the house and this committee since 1934, I believe. It contains 251 sections, incorporating in their text the provisions of a number of statutes relative to defence, totalling approximately 600 sections in all. This is far more than a consolidation. It is a new act which unifies and consolidates all the legislation having to do with defence.

I am sure I express the views of other members of the special committee when I say that the expeditious and thoroughly conscientious way in which their work was carried out was in no small measure due to the excellence of the chairmanship of the hon. member for Vancouver Centre. In that regard I am sure he would be the first to say that he had the support of members of the committee representing all parties in the house.

The bill contains some forty-seven different amendments made by the committee, of which about thirty were proposed by representatives of the department, and the remainder originated in the committee. I do not think the general trend of the amendments is controversial. If they had any general pattern it was to provide measures which would be even more uniform in respect of the three services than those in the bill as it was referred to the committee. Also the changes in the provisions generally tended to favour the position of the accused, but they are entirely acceptable to the department and to the government.

I commend the bill in its amended form to the consideration of the committee.

**Mr. Harkness:** Mr. Chairman, the minister has said that the bill was carefully considered in the special committee. We received fine co-operation from the representatives of the three service departments which are particularly concerned with the administration of justice in the services, and I should like to thank them for their co-operation. As a result of the contact that members of the committee had with them, I am sure we were all convinced that administration of justice in the services will be well looked after by them.

The minister has said that the committee suggested a considerable number of amendments. Of course some were suggested which were not adopted, and I presume that is always bound to be so. Everything suggested is not acceptable to the services concerned or to the government. By and large, however, I think the amendments adopted improved the bill to a considerable extent. I think the useful work done by the committee is an indication of the fact that a committee to deal

with defence matters in a broader manner would be a useful instrument for investigation of all matters concerning defence.

All members of the committee expressed their views fully as to changes that should be made in the various sections of the bill, and so far as I am concerned I will have very little more to say now. The amendments were numerous, and in the committee we passed a motion that the bill be reprinted before it was brought back to the house. I do not know whether or not that has been done. I have not had a new copy of the bill, and I think it might be a little difficult for members who were not on the committee to follow it without having the reprinted bill before them. I presume we can go ahead with the old bill, however, and have the amendments read as they arise.

**Mr. Gillis:** As one of the members who had the privilege of serving on the special committee, I have a few observations to make. The first is that the title of the bill may be misleading. We may think we are starting to discuss a measure concerning national defence as such. My conception of the present bill is that we are not devising ways and means to build forts, an air force, and so on. The main objective of the bill is to bring about some uniformity in the matter of military law so far as the army, navy and air force are concerned. In the past the army was largely guided by the old British army act. Being a relatively new organization, the air force had their own rules and regulations in matters of discipline. The navy has its own formulas. The main objective of this bill is to arrive at some uniformity in matters of discipline, and I think in that particular the bill has achieved its objective. I do not think you will ever be able to have a workable arrangement that will tie the navy, the army, and the air force together; the navy should have some latitude because of the difference in its operations. Looking at the record of all three services I think we must admit that during the last war there was an excellent job of administration by all services.

I had the opportunity to go over this bill section by section, and I am satisfied with it; I think it is as good a job as could be done under the circumstances. I found the committee to be a most efficient committee, and its meetings were well attended. The chairman did an excellent job. He was cool-headed and seemed to have a lot of common sense, something which is rather rare today.

If there is any particular credit to be given to anyone in connection with this bill I think it should go to the officials of the different branches who were called as witnesses. There were three young men before