

National Defence Act Amendment

member. I am not a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan. I graduated cum laude from the school of hard knocks. I do not pretend to be a lawyer who might qualify as a prosecutor or attorney for defence.

The hon. member for Bow River unwittingly put his finger on one of the most important pieces of evidence I wish to refer to this evening, and that is the evidence of Air Chief Marshal Miller. That gentleman appeared before the committee in opposition to Bill C-243 without having taken the trouble to read its contents. Surely that was an affront to the committee and its members. Surely he should not have taken that attitude in giving evidence in opposition to a measure which admittedly he had not taken the trouble to read, though it had been given first reading five months earlier. For this very reason I asked a series of questions of Air Chief Marshal Miller, because I wanted to bring this fact to the attention of the committee. I would have thought that even an unperceptive jurymen would have seen what I was endeavouring to do, but obviously the hon. member for Bow River did not. I asked the following questions:

● (8:30 p.m.)

Do you consider that the prospects of unification held out to the public has been detrimental to naval or other recruitment, thus far?

Whether this is so is another question. An article appeared in the *Toronto Telegram* of March 25, 1967, which indicated that recruiting is reaching a relatively high level and that for two months the recruitment was 2,196; that there were 556 in the—

An hon. Member: How many people went out in that period?

Mr. Byrne:—navy, 752 in the army and 888 in the R.C.A.F. In reply to my question Air Chief Marshal Miller said:

I would be giving a "Blue Sea" opinion on that that I could not back up. I think it has, but there are so many factors involved in what persuades anybody to join the navy, that for me to say that this is a factor or not, is just a matter of opinion and I could not make that.

So that in his opinion there are a number of factors that influence recruitment, but the question of unification was no more important than the others. I then asked:

Then, do you believe that the implementation of Bill C-243 would result in significant demoralization of the various forces?

The hon. member for Bow River seemed to think that "demoralization" was not a proper

word; at least, he was quite exercised about it. I took the trouble to look up the meaning of "demoralization", and I found that to demoralize is to weaken the morale, to destroy normal function, to throw into disorder. I wanted to establish whether Air Chief Marshal Miller was deeply concerned with the question of morale in the armed forces. His reply to my question was:

If rushed, I would think so.

That answer obviously means that he differs in the matter of timing; unification may be all right a year or two from now, but it is not all right at the moment. Then I asked Air Chief Marshal Miller this question:

You said at the outset—

Meaning the beginning of the hearing.

—I believe it was in answering Mr. Forrestall—

Actually, it was in answer to a question put by the hon. member for Vancouver East.

—that you have not had time to take a look at the bill? Do you know when this bill was given first reading?

This may go down in history as one of the most ludicrous pieces of cross-examination, as was suggested by the hon. member for Bow River; but I want to point out again that the purpose of the questioning was not to establish that unification had a demoralizing effect, but rather that the witness who appeared before the committee and expressed such great concern about unification had not taken the trouble to read the bill. We were in fact dealing with clause 2 of the bill which has the effect of eliminating sections 15 to 18 of the National Defence Act. Of course sections 15 to 18 of the National Defence Act deal with the structure of the forces. Therefore, in effect Air Chief Marshal Miller was appearing before the committee in opposition to the bill and was speaking on the specific clause dealing with unification, yet he had not taken the trouble to read the bill.

As further evidence that Air Chief Marshal Miller had not read the bill, and did not know of its contents, I wish to quote further from the minutes of proceedings and evidence of the committee hearing of March 20, 1967, page 2295.

An hon. Member: He would have been wiser if he had read the bill.

Mr. Byrne: The hon. member for Hamilton West asked this question:

What are you unhappy about, sir? Can you specify what aspects you are unhappy about?