

*National Defence Act Amendment*

long before I became an adult. However, I am very proud of them.

• (4:00 p.m.)

On May 31, 1939, King George VI presented his colour to the R.C.N. in Beacon Hill Park, Victoria, B.C. The hon. member is probably familiar with that and in all likelihood was present. Perhaps I should repeat it for him. On May 31, 1939, King George VI presented his colour to the R.C.N. in Beacon Hill Park, Victoria, B.C. We started the building of our fleet and the *Fraser* and *St. Laurent* sailed in those early months before the war. On September 1 the R.C.N., the R.C.N.R. and the R.C.N.V.R. were placed on active service. On September 10 Canada entered the war by declaring war against Germany. On September 16 convoy HX-1 sailed from Halifax to the United Kingdom; the local escort were H.M.C.S. *St. Laurent* and *Saguenay*. Again we have these two very famous names of ships that made a very great contribution to the war effort. On December 10 the first Canadian troop convoy sailed for Britain, escorted out of Halifax by H.M.C.S. *Ottawa*, *Restigouche*, *Fraser* and *St. Laurent*. These are the things we are throwing away, that we are casually brushing aside because they are not right for the next 50 years.

On May 24, 1940 H.M.C.S. *St. Laurent*, *Restigouche* and *Skeena* sailed to reinforce the naval defences of the British Isles in repayment, in part, of our great debt to the past that some people would like to brush aside casually.

There are a lot of significant dates in 1940, such as June 25 and July 31. These are dates which remain in the memories of a lot of people, and they are not ashamed of that fact. On September 24 of that year the *Annapolis*, *Columbia*, *Niagara*, *St. Clair*, *St. Croix* and *St. Francis* ex--U.S.N. destroyers which were part of the 50 or 60 given to the British naval strength at that time, were taken over, if I remember correctly, by the British and handed over in turn to the Canadian authorities to man.

On October 22, H.M.C.S. *Margaree* was lost in collision with the *Port Fairy* in the north Atlantic. On October 25 H.M.C.S. *Bras D'or* foundered in the St. Lawrence. On December 4 the *Prince Henry* was commissioned as an armed merchant cruiser, followed by the *Prince David* on December 28, again extending our capability to contribute to the defence of the free world.

On March 25, 1941 the *Otter* burned and sank in the approaches to Halifax harbour.

[Mr. Forrestall.]

On May 25 the first Canadian corvettes arrived in St. John's to establish the Newfoundland escort force. On June 14, three weeks later, the first group of ships of this Newfoundland escort force sailed to protect a convoy of merchant ships along that treacherous trek from Halifax and St. John's to the United Kingdom and up to Murmansk.

The war is full of records of glorious dates. Those who want to brush them aside casually are the less enriched for it. It is records such as these that build some spirit of Canadianism. Certainly the loss of them is not going to build that spirit. We should be able to look back with pride at a distinguishable force, an identifiable element of our armed forces. Men should be able to say that they joined a particular force, that this is their heritage, that it is what they are interested in. This, Mr. Chairman, is what we are throwing away. It is what we are being chided about. What is wrong with having some feeling of deep seated pride in our history?

I could go on for an hour reciting dates such as these. If we keep on as we are we will not have enough ships left to constitute a Royal Canadian Navy even if the government wanted to retain that force.

I have one or two other remarks to make on this particular clause before it passes. I understand that the amendment has now been withdrawn so I will be brief. My remarks have essentially to do with the point made earlier, by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, at which time he likened what is happening here to clause 2 and to the intent and content of clause 6, namely the compulsory aspect of this bill.

I am sure that the decision to do this is the minister's alone and nobody else's. No recourse has been had to any of the arguments that we advanced, either in committee or in this chamber during the last 12 or 14 months. Indeed at times it has been so frustrating that we wondered whether there was any point in continuing to ask questions, because in most instances it was extremely difficult to get straightforward and clear-cut answers.

In this connection I would remind the minister that compulsory action of this sort will not result in any meaningful implementation of his plans or this bill. The men will accept it because it is compulsory and they are loyal. Every officer and serving man is loyal first of all to Canada. But they have had no part in this whatever. Their best advice has been brushed aside. It may have been considered but we have not been told it has been duly