

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in the speech we have just listened to we have heard lots of words. Fortunately there has been an amendment following that speech which does point up some specific facts upon which the official opposition wishes to take a stand different from that recommended by the government to this house.

Mr. Fleming: Facts is the right word.

Mr. St. Laurent (Quebec East): There had been previously some similar statements made outside the house and some similar statements made in several newspapers that were in strange contrast with the encomiums that were being heaped upon the Secretary of State for External Affairs by every country other than his own.

Before dealing specifically with the points that are suggested in this amendment to the motion for an address in response to the speech from the throne, I will take up one or two of the things that I was able to pinpoint in the avalanche of words that came from the hon. gentleman who is presently leading Her Majesty's official opposition.

One of them was that parliament should have been called earlier. Well, in order to answer that point I think it is sufficient to recall to those who know what is the constitutional requirement and the constitutional practice and what has always been the constitutional requirement and the constitutional practice. Those who were here in 1939 remember what was done at that time. Those who were here in 1950 when the defence act was amended will remember the discussions that took place at that time. Those who were here in 1950 will remember that it was referred to again in 1950 and in order to avoid the suggestion that I made about the speech we have just listened to, I would refer, for instance, to one paragraph of an intervention that was made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) when we were dealing with the Canadian Forces Act on September 8, 1950.

This is at page 494 of *Hansard*, the second column, and it reads as follows:

From what the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) has said tonight, and from what has been said previously by the Secretary of State for External Affairs and on other occasions by the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), I feel they are with me in this, so I do not think I have to argue it. I did think it was possible, however, that the house might be so preoccupied with other matters this session as not to get this issue right into the open and have it made perfectly clear. I hope before we leave—it could be now, or later in this debate, or later in the session, but certainly soon—it will be made perfectly clear just how the matter stands as to the responsibility of the government to

The Address—Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent parliament, which is there all the time, but which is particularly clear and important in this matter of putting our forces on active service.

Well, when that suggestion—I will not say that challenge—was made, I immediately rose in my place and said:

I think the matter should be made perfectly clear at once, so there can be no misapprehension or uncomfortable feeling about it anywhere. When this bill is passed and becomes law it is the intention of the government to comply with the letter and spirit of section 33, in so far as its policy has been announced with respect to Korea.

Section 33 is the section that provides that if an order in council is passed, as the section authorizes in express terms, putting our forces on active service parliament, if it is not then in session, will be called within ten days to deal with the matter.

The intention of the government is that if any other service should be required of this special force, which of course is not being created solely because of the Korean incident, if any police action, for instance, that has a warlike character should be required of it elsewhere than Korea, the government would of course have to make its decision, but it would immediately call parliament, make that decision known and leave it to parliament to approve or disapprove of it. I think that is the only way the Canadian people would feel they were getting the protection they expect from their representatives.

And then further on page 495:

If anything else should be required at any future time in order to carry out similar commitments, the government of course would have to take the responsibility of making its decision, but would certainly have to place itself in the hands of parliament within the ten-day period for ratification or disapproval of that decision.

That has always been the constitutional requirement and the constitutional practice, that the government has to take the responsibility of making a decision and then put itself in the hands of parliament so that parliament may determine whether it will provide the funds to implement that decision or whether it will refuse to provide the funds and get another government to carry out the policies that parliament wants to have carried out. That has always been the position and that will always be the position so long as this party has the responsibility for public affairs in this country.

Just as soon as it was possible to make a concrete decision which we could submit to parliament we made that decision, and on the same day we recommended that His Excellency summon parliament. Parliament is here today because of that summons. We are here today in the hands of parliament, having taken that responsibility of making a concrete decision and asking parliament to authorize the use of public funds to implement that decision.