

Adjournment Debate

Canadian Armed Forces that denied full equality to gays and lesbians. He stated in a letter which was addressed to a number of individuals who wrote to the Government on this issue: "No change is currently being contemplated to the Canadian Forces' position in respect of homosexuality". Fortunately the Minister of National Defence was outvoted by his cabinet colleagues. The Cabinet has made it very clear that it will not tolerate a policy which discriminates in this systematic manner against gays and lesbians.

I would note that thousands of homosexuals have had distinguished careers in the Canadian Armed Forces. One example is Major Sutcliffe of Toronto who served for 18 years in a variety of fronts, and rose from the rank of private to major, has seven campaign medals as well as the M.B.E. and the C.D. He was fired solely on the basis of his sexual orientation. It is not a question of opening up the Armed Forces to gays and lesbians. It is a question of recognizing the reality that there are already homosexuals within the Armed Forces. Surely we should recognize that these individuals who serve their country with distinction should not have to live in conditions of pain, oppression and of hiding their true reality.

I would note that there are other countries which have long since abolished these policies. The Netherlands, for example, has stated very clearly that one's private sexual orientation is in no way a bar to membership in the Armed Forces. I note that according to NATO, they have one of the finest navies in NATO. Clearly that has not been a barrier to them.

I hope the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Wenman), who is responding on behalf of the Government today, will recognize that the time has come for change and that the words of the Government, which call for an end to all discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, must become a reality. I ask the Parliamentary Secretary when the Government will repeal Canadian Forces Administrative Order 1920? How many more task forces and committees must the Generals set up before this employer, which is clearly the most homophobic employer in the country, finally recognizes that equality must at last come to the Canadian Armed Forces as well?

Mr. Robert Wenman (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member has often expressed his view on this subject. After the Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie) tabled the Government's comprehensive response to the recommendation of the Parliamentary Committee on Equality Rights several weeks ago, the Hon. Member asked the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Nielsen) the question which he posed today. At that time the Minister appropriately referred him to the page where the Government's position was stated in clear and understandable language by the Minister of Justice.

I want to inform the Hon. Member that on all issues affecting the Department of National Defence, we are actively pursuing which procedures and policies are necessary in order to conform with the principles of the Charter as stated by the

Minister of Justice in the House on March 4. To that end, the staff of the Chief of Defence has set up a departmental task force which will look at all issues and recommend an appropriate course of action.

I believe it is very clear that the major responsibility of the Armed Forces of Canada is to ensure the security of Canada and our alliances, to ensure the operational effectiveness, morale and discipline of the Armed Forces and that we uphold standards of behaviour and conduct compatible with the objectives as stated by the Minister of Justice.

I am sure that these accommodations will be found and these objectives can be met within the response of the Minister of Justice when the task force reports. In the spirit of tolerance, justice and the interest of individual Canadians and the Canadian Armed Forces, I am confident that these values of tolerance, discipline and effectiveness of the Armed Forces will be upheld within those principles as enunciated.

CORPORATE AFFAIRS—LEGISLATION AFFECTING TAKEOVERS

Mr. Bill Attewell (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, on March 25 I asked the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Côté) a question about the mergers and acquisitions that are sweeping this country. I referred to, as reported at page 11860 of *Hansard*:

—the insidious mobilization of corporate concentration which may destroy competition—

and went on to ask:

When will Canada have effective competition and anti-combines laws to curb the voracious appetites of giants such as Gulf Canada, Imasco, and Petro-Canada—

Indeed, I believe we have a serious topic on our hands. It is evident just from what has happened in the past week. My question was asked just a day after the bid by Imasco for Genstar which, in turn, controls the giant Canada Trust.

I believe that particular acquisition is very dangerous for the main reason that this involves a potentially very big and successful non-financial conglomerate taking over one of the most successful and largest trust companies in Canada, Canada Trust.

With good management it might work out, but I do not think we can leave it to chance. The temptation could often be too great. There are temptations in terms of lowering competition. There are temptations as far as insider trading. For those reasons, that particular deal causes me concern when one considers what has happened.

In many cases, the depositors of various banks will be funding this acquisition to the tune of \$2 billion. We have the great risk of competition being lessened. In an acquisition just a few months ago there was a tax concession, legal at the time, given to a large conglomerate of \$590 million. Ironically, the average Canadian depositor is funding the very types of deals of these monolithic structures which are going to come back and haunt them and, indeed, hurt them through less competition in the market-place.