

National Defence Act Amendment

effective, which will not waste money, of which we will be proud not only in Canada but throughout the world.

Mr. Prud'homme: Mr. Chairman, I wish to make a contribution to this debate, because I think it is a most important and most interesting one, and because I cannot understand the stubbornness of the official opposition in fighting this legislation, particularly the stubbornness of the flying squad, if I may call it that, composed mainly of the hon. members for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Nugent), the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) and the hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. MacInnis).

One of the arguments of the official opposition against Bill No. C-243, from the start of this debate, has been that all retired top officers oppose the unification of the armed forces.

At the beginning of my remarks I should like to put on the record some of the statements issued by officers who are surely as distinguished as those who are opposed to unification and integration, by high-ranking retired officers who give their unqualified support to unification.

The first is that of Air Vice Marshal Sully, as reproduced by the Canadian Press on November 9, 1966, and I quote:

[English]

When so many ex senior officers are bursting into print with emotional opposition to Mr. Hellyer's plans for unification of our defence services, it is time that some of us who support this forward movement spoke up.

As an experienced senior officer and as a businessman,—

And I emphasize "businessman".

—I find it difficult to understand how any rationally-minded man could oppose this excellent move to unification of our defence services.

Mr. Dinsdale: He must be a Liberal. A Liberal must have written that.

Mr. Prud'homme: Politics are not allowed in the Canadian armed forces.

Continuing:

I speak with intimate knowledge when I say that if the public was aware of the tremendous overlapping of effort, and the consequent inefficiency, and of the appalling inter-service jealousies and rivalries for status, they would rise as one and demand immediate unification and at a much faster clip than is now planned.

Mr. Churchill: Would the hon. member identify the author of that?

Mr. Prud'homme: In case the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre wonders, I did my share in the Canadian armed forces. I was in Shilo, Manitoba, for two years, and I was in a position to see that what the minister advocates is correct. I shall now continue quoting:

Another problem that worries me and indeed frightens me, is that this plan was put forward over two years ago. Everyone was informed of it and the intention of this plan was obvious to any thoughtful man or officer. What were these senior officers doing in the last two years? They have had every opportunity to express themselves. Have they just finally found their way through on this business? This frightens me. Is this an indication of the lethargy in thinking in our services? Fortunately, I have spoken to many young and dedicated officers and they are all enthusiastic about the plan. Of course, some others will have to "pull up their socks" and perhaps they shudder a bit.

[Translation]

And he continues as follows:

[English]

To our politicians, please get thinking about Canada. Forget about your party status. This is a real opportunity and you will be happy and proud you had a chance to help.

Mr. Churchill: Who signed that article?

[Translation]

Mr. Prud'homme: I would ask you now to hear what Commodore A. B. Fraser-Harris has to say:

[English]

Mr. Churchill: Would the hon. member identify the author?

Mr. Prud'homme: This is by the Canadian Press of November 9, 1966.

Mr. Churchill: But who is the author of the letter?

Mr. Prud'homme: Air Vice Marshal Sully.

[Translation]

Let us listen now to Commodore A. B. Fraser-Harris, who said the following in a telegram he sent to the Canadian Press, probably to Mr. David MacIntosh, of whom I should like to speak later:

[English]

Heard from abroad the traditionalist uproar against service unification. At a time when enlightened people throughout the world are learning at last that the pigment of human skin is not a mark of quality, local concern over the colour of a uniform or the title of a man appears singularly unimpressive.

And please listen to this:

Let us always be willing to learn from history and be strengthened by tradition but let us never forget that history is made by the actions of men