

Interim Supply

I further suggest that in order to expedite such a meeting and lend urgency to it, we should consider adjourning the house for an hour or two so that they may carry on debate and discussion face to face, with the urgency emphasized by the fact that the house is standing adjourned. I do not make this as a motion but as a suggestion to which consideration should be given in order to emphasize the gravity of the problem facing the Canadian nation.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Chairman, in the unification bill which received first reading a short time ago, and which will come before the house for second reading we hope in the near future, we will be dealing with a matter which will have a very great effect on our defence forces. These are the defence forces on which we spend one quarter of our taxes every year, and on which we depend for the security of the country.

On a matter of such importance to our country I believe it is imperative that, before the members of the house should be asked to pass on the principle of the measure, and in order to do an adequate and proper job of examining the legislation, we must have at our disposal all the material that it is possible to obtain. This material that we need to do an adequate job of examining this measure is possessed only by the minister and his advisers.

• (4:00 p.m.)

We have asked the government to have the committee on national defence reassembled so that we may learn from the Minister of National Defence and from his advisers how they plan to bring about unification, and how unification is going to improve the efficiency of our forces, as the minister, over and over again, has claimed in his self-laudatory statements in the press and on television. These questions to which we require answers have not been answered in the white paper of 1964. In that white paper the question of unification was only very lightly touched upon. Since then the minister, as we know only too well, has refused to answer the questions which we have put to him over and over again. It is for that reason we are still persistently asking him to enable us to do the job that our constituents sent us to parliament to do; that is, to examine this important legislation. This can be done properly only by having the committee assembled so that we could obtain this information from the minister and his advisers.

[Mr. Patterson.]

Because of the minister's refusal to call together the committee so that we would be able to obtain the information we have requested, we are being asked to vote for a principle which will have an important and far-reaching effect on the future of this country without the information which is needed in order to intelligently discuss the matter. There is a very important principle at stake here. The government is demanding that parliament make a decision on the principle of a bill, while at the same time it is deliberately denying the representatives of the people of this country the information possessed by the government and which can be obtained only from witnesses who have not been made available. This information is necessary to us, as representatives of the people who sent us here, so that we can decide whether or not the principle of unification is good.

Mr. Hellyer: You will get it as soon as we get on with the debate.

Mr. Hees: I ask the minister how he expects the representatives of the people to pass on the principle of a bill before the information upon which we must judge the principle is made available. He knows, I know, and the members of the house know, that this is an absolute impossibility.

Mr. Hellyer: You will get the information when you get to the committee.

Mr. Hees: These are the self-same tactics that were used by another Liberal government ten years ago in the infamous pipe line debate of 1956. That denial of information to parliament led to the very much justified defeat of that government a year later. Today, we are faced with the same kind of arrogance, the same refusal of information. This is the same type of information the Minister of Trade and Commerce at that time, Mr. Howe, refused to give the house concerning details with regard to the construction of the Trans-Canada pipe line. The results of that refusal are too well known to require retelling here. This is exactly the same situation today. This minister has the information we want and his advisers have the information. If he would call together the committee on national defence we would have before us all the officials who have the information we require. We would be in a position to ask them for the information we need, and we would obtain it.

Today, once again, we refuse to accept the dictates of an arrogant government which says that the necessary information shall be