

National Defence Act Amendment

Mr. Fairweather: Now that we have followed the perambulations of the leader of the house with regard to points of order and so on, I should like to assure the hon. gentleman that I was on the committee which recommended rule 15A to parliament. I support the rule. But I feel it is too bad that the government did not have the courage to use the business committee throughout our proceedings in parliament, and has resorted to it only when a bill as controversial and as badly conceived as this, is before us.

I have one or two other things to say about the rule which I intend to get off my chest, in spite of spurious points of order. As was pointed out in the *Montreal Gazette* on Saturday last, closure or a form of closure should be used in connection with legislation which has evident, urgent and imperative aims. The bill before us fulfils none of these requirements. We have the minister's own evidence and his speeches before this committee to support that statement. The questions asked by the hon. member for Greenwood remain unanswered. He said on April 3:

Mr. Chairman, what we in Canada need in the field of defence is a clear defence policy. In all the mass of words spoken by the defence minister and his aides on the subject of unification, there has been complete failure to clarify or justify our defence roles, a failure to say what the future of the armed forces is to be, what purposes they are to serve, what sort of hostilities we expect to be involved in.

As the *Gazette* points out, a fundamental weakness in the government's position is the lack of clarity, the cloudiness surrounding this bill.

It is unreasonable for the government to push ahead with dogged determination on such an issue and expect the opposition (among them many who are friendly to the principle involved) to go along for the ride. It cannot drive ahead on a cloudy issue, except by driving into the clouds.

We have been treated to a good deal of editorial comment on this issue in the last few months. As many speakers have pointed out, one of Canada's great newspapers, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, has dealt with this matter, and its distinguished editor Mr. R. S. Malone was undoubtedly the editorialist who wrote the article which appeared on April 4, from which I take these words:

Members must surely recognize the grave responsibility they bear as individuals when voting on this bill. This is a question which far transcends both politicking and party.

It is in this spirit that I wish to say a word or two about the bill before us, in spite of the

[Mr. Olson.]

fact that some people object to an issue taking up ten or 12 days of the time of parliament. I make no apology for adding a few minutes to the length of this debate. I happen to be worried because the defence structure of this country is being dismembered without either the minister or his department really knowing what the alternative will be. By using the technique of public relations and hard sell it is easy to smother the committee and the country with statistics and with figures. Nowhere, however, have I seen a clear exposition of Canada's role in defence for the next decade, or for that matter for the next three decades. I believe we are entitled to this information as we study a matter of such crucial importance.

Nowhere have I seen any real evidence of substantial savings—one of the great boasts made by the minister in the early days of the hard sell—as a result of this new proposal. Nowhere have I seen any evidence that the efficiency of our fighting forces would be increased. I myself, for what it is worth, favour integration at the command level, for logistic support, in the administration and in the ancillary services. Our forces must be so organized that they may continue their ready integration with United States and United Kingdom forces—that word “integration” is a dangerous one to use in this debate, but the use of the word integration is all right in this context because, obviously, no matter what may happen in the world in the next two decades, those two countries will remain our closest allies.

I am not one who is against radical experiments if they are made to reform situations or overcome problems of such pressing urgency and importance that ordinary time-tested methods will not do. But I am against having a concept forced upon the country for no other reason, as far as I can see, than to advance the minister's ambitions.

The hon. gentleman has become, I suggest, the captive of his own propaganda. He has become, I maintain, a handmaiden—if that is a possible concept—of the technocrats whose thrills are obtained by listening to the whirring of computers and whose excitement is the result of flashing lights and figures disgorged in steady and unrelenting streams.

May I return to quote a paragraph or two from the editorial which appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on April 4?

Mr. Hellyer: That has been read into the record seven or eight times already. There is