

*National Defence Act Amendment*

• (3:30 p.m.)

not give blank cheques to governments. Democratic parliaments—particularly those which follow the British pattern—always reserve the right to demonstrate where the government is in error. In this particular instance the minister has substituted slogans for facts. This has been commented upon editorially as being an unseemly rush. He has drawn rosy pictures of the inevitable result of this well evaluated legislation. He has described it in the most exaggerated terms. This seems to be an unusual position for someone who operates under our democratic system of government to take.

I know the suggestion has been and is being put forward that the government has been forced to bring in closure because the opposition refuses to let this decision be made by the due processes of discussion in the house. We know that this is a house of minorities; we know there is a regional imbalance of representation in this parliament. We know that the government does not respect the national perspective or the national consensus on any matter. This is the reason I feel it has been able to get away with divisive legislation during its brief three or four year history in this country.

This decision to invoke closure, however, is not new. It was referred to by the chairman of the Liberal caucus committee, the hon. member for Durham, away back on March 28 when he indicated in a letter to his constituents that this likely would have to be the ultimate manoeuvre of the government if it was to get its controversial bill through the house. This is not a conclusion they have reached because of the intransigence of the opposition. They were thinking in these terms long before this debate in this final stage was under way in the house. This, of course, is true to the Liberal attitude on most matters.

During the second world war the Minister of Agriculture served with a night fighter squadron much the same as I did. I am surprised he has not taken part in this debate, because night fighters above all groups were aware of the success of combined operations, and the benefits in esprit de corps of the rivalry and competition based on traditions and records that had been established. There was this sense of keen competition even between the three Canadian night fighter squadrons. As I say, I am surprised based on his experience he has not taken part or made any comment about this measure.

Some two weeks ago we invited the Minister of Agriculture to my constituency to preside at the opening of the Manitoba Winter Fair. Unfortunately he could not find room in his departmental aircraft for the member for Brandon-Souris and I was not able to accompany him to that constituency on that occasion. At that time he did make certain statements which I thought were a little out of place for a man who had been invited to preside in a ceremonial way at the opening of that fair, which is reputed to be the best of its kind in Canada, next to the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto.

I have in my hand an article from the *Brandon Sun* of April 4, just after the minister's visit, in which he is reported to have said he had all sorts of useful agriculture legislation to bring before the house but the opposition would not let him do so. One might say that kind of comment is a violation of western hospitality, and if the minister were a westerner I am sure he would not have trespassed in this manner. One does not deal with partisan political matters when attending a function as a result of an invitation by the people concerned.

According to this article the minister, in reference to loans for agricultural fairs, said this:

Noting that making such loans available was "one of the planks in our last campaign", Mr. Greene noted that "delay" by the opposition has prevented the government from bringing the measure to the house so far.

Who is in control of the business of this house, the government or the opposition? Obviously the government cannot get other business done if it insists on pursuing controversial items of this kind. The Minister of National Defence said that all he wanted was a blank cheque. I quote him quite precisely on this regard. He has also said he has the legislative authority to proceed with integration and reorganization. He gave this assurance in the explanatory notes and during his opening statement at the commencement of the committee stage on April 3. The minister has also said that unification will not go forward to completion for five or ten years. Why are we blockading all the other wonderful pieces of legislation the government continues to talk about? The government suggests that the opposition in this house is creating this blockade. This is unadulterated propaganda.

It must be obvious to anyone who has travelled in western Canada that we have a