

Interim Supply

many occasions this was their point, namely, that there should be greater participation by the ordinary member in the consideration and formulation of the legislative process. I am not being partisan when I bring this forward for the consideration of the committee. I can tell the Prime Minister that this feeling will continue in ever increasing tempo, because the house wants to be informed before it is committed in principle to a particular form of legislation. The Prime Minister knows that many of the private members on the government side of the house have expressed this point of view, as have members on the opposition side. There is no difference in the sincerity of members in this respect. This is one of the reasons, I believe it is a valid principle that I am putting forward.

We have had two examples of this course and I am trying to make a third. I am being very sincere when I say that for something as fundamental as the unification of our forces we should receive all the information that is available. The minister has been as silent as a mummy about disclosing any particulars that are in his mind. Even those in the services have not any idea of what is intended. We are simply told that this is going to be done, and the house must accept it on principle. We have to consider this question on the basis of past performance and the minister's use of Rand formula language, something called "Hellyerlee", whereby we get the same phraseology. All across the country editorial writers and news commentators have asked the minister to explain what he is trying to do.

• (4.20 p.m.)

This is something that the minister has not been able to do, because in many instances he himself does not know what he is after.

Mr. Hellyer: I plan to explain this on second reading.

Mr. Lambert: We cannot rely on the efficacy of that because the minister's explanations in the past have been so deficient.

Mr. Hellyer: You will not even listen to them.

Mr. Lambert: We have to listen to this Rand formula language which means nothing.

Mr. Pearson: How can you rely on the committee then?

Mr. Lambert: Because the committee can get what we cannot get in this house the

testimony of people who are recently out of the service. We would not have to rely on the three very venerable gentlemen the minister's special assistant trotted out the other day in support of unification, men who had been out of the forces for over 25 years.

Mr. Matheson: Would the hon. member accept a question?

Mr. Lambert: Certainly.

Mr. Matheson: May I ask the hon. member, who has always been vice chairman and therefore a member of the steering committee, whether there was ever a witness he asked to be called who was not in fact called?

Mr. Lambert: There is no question here of a withholding of witnesses, and no allegation has ever made in this regard. I do not know the relevancy of the hon. member's question.

Mr. Matheson: Did the vice chairman ever object to the agenda of any of our defence committee meetings?

Mr. Lambert: No, because I participated in arranging it. I am not the one who is objecting to any of the agendas we had. It is the Prime Minister who said that we failed to discuss unification.

Mr. Brewin: May I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Lambert: Yes.

Mr. Brewin: Is it not a fact that the proceedings of the defence committee were terminated after the calling of what I might refer to as official witnesses by the minister and before any other critics could be called?

Mr. Lambert: This is very much so. Had the defence committee wanted to call any outside witnesses on this year's estimates, and this matter had been considered informally, it would not have been possible to do so because the government majority, acting on that very quick motion moved by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, saw to it that the committee sent the estimates back to the house without comment.

So far as the transcript of the proceedings at the June 23 meeting is concerned, which was the occasion when the commander of maritime command appeared before the committee, so six weeks expired, if not more, before hon. members received the report. As a matter of fact, I know that the clerk did not have it back for between five to six weeks. It