

Interim Supply

Then it goes on to talk about defence policy and defence organization. It continues:

—it is the integration of the armed forces of Canada under a single chief of defence staff and a single defence staff.

Then comes this sentence:

This will be the first step toward a single unified defence force for Canada.

The first stage was the integration of the service headquarters under a single chief of defence staff. That required new legislation. The legislation was debated by parliament in the knowledge that integration was the first step to unification. That legislation was examined by a special defence committee and passed in July, 1964. It was discussed in this house.

Leading members of the opposition took part in the debate. They indicated they were not too happy about some aspects of integration but they did not feel strongly enough about the matter to ask for a standing vote. It was passed on division. This was the measure with respect to integration and, as the white paper indicated, it was the first step toward unification. There was no discussion about unification at that time.

On May 12, 1966, the Minister of National Defence told the defence committee, and I am reading from the evidence:

We have now reached the stage for final steps toward a single unified force as forecast in the white paper.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): We cannot believe him any more.

Mr. Pearson: The hon. member ought to believe that, because the bill is already before the house.

On June 9, as reported at page 159, volume 7 of the evidence, the hon. member for Queens, who made what I thought was a very thoughtful contribution to this discussion the other day, asked General Fleury who was giving evidence:

Would you care to define for us what the final goal is, in simple terms?

To which the general replied:

Integration was a step toward the final goal of unification and this is a matter of policy on which obviously I am not really competent to comment.

An hon. Member: No. He was fired for disagreeing.

Mr. Pearson: Later, on June 10 as reported at page 185 of volume 8 of the evidence we find the following:

Mr. Brewin: Is it still planned eventually to arrive at a force which would be unified in practically all of these aspects?

[Mr. Pearson.]

Mr. Hellyer: It would be a single unified force, Mr. Brewin. In order to have a single unified force, however, legislation is required.

For the members of the house to take the position that unification is something new which is being forced upon them and that there should be a further opportunity for a committee to discuss this matter before the bill is debated seems to me to ignore the fact that the question was before the committee for a long period when there was ample opportunity to discuss the matter and to call witnesses.

The fact is that the evidence shows that in 1964-1965—and this has already been put on record in *Hansard*—the defence committee met 36 times after the white paper had been made public and called 41 witnesses. In 1966 it met 15 times and called 34 witnesses including serving officers, retired officers and civilians. The minister and the associate minister appeared before the committee to discuss the white paper and to be interrogated on the question of integration leading to unification 63 times. There were 2,300 pages of testimony taken.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: That is why I say that in no time in our history has more information on defence matters, including the government's proposal to integrate and unify the forces, been made available to the house either directly or through a committee on defence.

After all that, a bill was introduced into the house. The government now says this bill should be examined in conformity with the age-old British and Canadian way, that is, at second reading there should be a decision on the basis principle; then it should go to the standing committee on defence and then, if it survives those stages, it should come back for third reading. It has been made clear, and I can confirm it, that the discussion of the bill will not be delayed unnecessarily. There are a few bills which I think should be given priority.

What does the official opposition say to that? Perhaps the chief opposition whip would allow me to quote what he said the other evening as reported at page 9680 of *Hansard*:

I assure the minister (of defence) that this debate will conclude if he will accept the proposal that I placed before him this afternoon.

Well, that is the basic difference between us. Hon. gentlemen opposite say: "If you will do it our way, we shall let you have supply."