

National Defence Act Amendment

Service Force. For the minister's benefit I read the following passage:

General order No. 135 announced that the governor in council had "authorized the organization of a Canadian Active Service Force" and had "named as Corps of the Active Militia" and "placed on active service in Canada" certain specified units. The accompanying schedules listed nearly 300 individual units and formation headquarters, including the headquarters of "1st Corps C.A.S.F.", the whole of the 1st and 2nd Divisions, C.A.S.F., and quotas of corps, army and lines of communication troops. In addition, this order incorporated in the C.A.S.F. the units and details of the non-permanent active militia which had been called out under general order No. 124 to guard vulnerable points and man coast defences. Some additions were now made to the original list. The N.P.A.M. soldiers on duty were attested into the C.A.S.F., except for those not wishing to enlist, who were released in due course.

● (9:20 p.m.)

This again is another well established precedent indicating that when the original list was changed the N.P.A.M. men were reattested into the C.A.S.F., except those who did not wish to enlist. They were released in due course.

The precedents are many, Mr. Chairman, and I do not have time to review them all. However, I will again draw the minister's attention to page 63 of the "Official History of the Canadian Army", where the following statement appears:

The decision to send a force overseas involved changing the basis on which men had so far been enlisted into the Active Service Force.

So the decision to send these men overseas required this change to be made. I continue:

The Minister of National Defence had explained to the House of Commons on September 11 that under the Militia Act (Section 68) no man could be required to serve in the field continuously for a longer period than one year, unless he had volunteered to serve for a longer period or "for the war". He suggested that if a decision were made to use part of the Active Service Force overseas the men might be "re-enlisted for overseas service".

I call to the minister's attention that at this time this country was at war. These men were in the active service of Canada, but before they were sent overseas they were going to be re-enlisted.

The statement issued on 19 September confirmed that this would be done, the men of both divisions being re-attested on a basis of volunteering for service in Canada or elsewhere for the duration of the war. Orders were shortly sent out that the whole of the Active Service Force was to be re-attested in this way."

And so it goes on and on, Mr. Chairman. During the war active service personnel were reattested to be sent overseas. This minister,

[Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South).]

along with his supporters in committee who do not understand the matter, voted against giving the men of our services today the opportunity to be reattested. In other words, they were given no choice whether they want to belong to the unified force or whether they want their discharge. The members of that committee voted against giving our armed services a privilege that this country saw fit to give them even during time of war. They are denying this to our servicemen.

What, in effect, did these members do in denying our forces this privilege, Mr. Chairman? I would draw this matter especially to the attention of the members from Quebec. They voted for conscription—because that is what it is, in effect. There is no voluntary aspect to this unified force unless the men are given the opportunity to be reattested and voluntarily become members of it. Unless this is done, the minister, with the support of the members of that committee, is conscripting every serving man in this country today into this unified force and denying him the right to make his choice.

An hon. Member: Hogwash.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to his speech has expired.

Some hon. Members: Carry on.

The Deputy Chairman: Is there unanimous consent to allow the hon. member to continue his speech?

Some hon. Members: No.

The Deputy Chairman: I regret there is not unanimous consent to allow the hon. member to continue his speech.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): Mr. Chairman, on a question of privilege I realize I do not have consent but I would draw to the attention of the Minister of National Defence, who this afternoon spoke for 60 minutes, that the understanding of hon. members was that we would be given the same opportunity. But I can wait. I can come back at him.

Mr. Andras: Mr. Chairman, as a member of the standing committee on national defence one of the things that has shocked, amazed and disturbed me is the superficial nature of the press reporting of the committee hearings. The testimony of many witnesses was only partially reported, usually just the sensational and negative portions of their evidence being