

*National Defence Act Amendment*

We know what happened to serving officers once they expressed opinions and the minister heard about them.

I have here a letter from the wife of one of them dated March 29, 1967 in connection with his enrolment. She writes that he was told the policy would allow him release on request three years after graduation.

If this was the agreement the minister should live up to it and on six month's notice give that man his release after three year's service. The hon. member continued:

This is not a man who has been commissioned under the R.O.T.P. plan, whose education was financed by the government and who now wants to get out early. Every one of these letters is from a man who has served his time, in all cases over three years.

I see no reason why the minister should institute a freeze at this time unless he is concerned about what is going to happen after passage of this bill. I think he will see the greatest exodus from the armed services that Canada has ever experienced. But that may not happen if legally these men can be held after passage of the bill. However, I suggest that if they are held against their will the deterioration of our forces will be publicly seen in a very short time. The hon. member continued:

There is a certain regulation—I do not know the numbers of these regulations—to the effect that in normal cases six months' notice is sufficient to allow a release.

An hon. member interjected:

That is what the minister told us.

From my experience in debating this bill in the house I can say that the minister has told us many things and many times has apparently reversed what he told us in the first place. This has contributed to the confusion that has resulted in such a long debate on the bill. Whatever happens to our armed forces, and whatever actions personnel may take, will be brought on by the minister's own actions. It was his actions which have led to the lengthy debate on the bill, a debate which is now being chopped off by the guillotine. The bill could have been debated in much shorter time if the minister had been forthcoming with explanations and with answers to the questions we asked him.

The minister deliberately created confusion for a definite purpose. We have gone over this time and time again. It all goes back to the time of the white paper. The minister has said that unification was definitely mentioned in the white paper. In reply I say that the word "unification" appears only once in the

white paper and has nothing whatever to do with what the minister now calls a single service concept. In the white paper it bore no relationship to the definition of unification that the minister gave us when we first asked him about it in the House of Commons. He gave us a jumble of words meaning nothing.

The hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings, replying to the interjection, continued:

I can believe that because the hon. member always makes good sense. These men are pilots and they want to get out. They entered the service under certain conditions, namely, that they could get out on six months' notice. The wife of one of them writes she has been advised that her husband has to complete two more years of service.

I wonder where this regulation came from? Is it a regulation or is it just a demand the minister is placing on those now serving in a voluntary force?

He has been serving for three years and has a commitment to a private firm which, of course, is jeopardized. This man is not one of those at the top; he is right in the ranks.

Another pilot writes under date of March 29, 1967 to the effect that last week officers had their release dates cancelled.

I cannot understand how this cancellation has come about. The minister has disrupted the lives of many men who want to get out of the service. These men have made commitments with respect to outside positions or have been promised outside positions. Now their future is jeopardized by the minister's action. This is very unfair.

Another member of the air force says that service policy resulted in a statement to the effect that all graduate pilots holding permanent commissions will be retained in the service until the completion of five years of qualified pilot service.

I wonder under what authority this directive was issued since we were told that prior to the passage of this bill a pilot could be released on six months' notice. I suggest that the minister has taken on more powers than he was granted by parliament. I repeat part of that last statement:

—will be retained in the service until the completion of five years of qualified pilot service. I am suggesting that at the time these pilots entered the service this policy was not in existence and it has resulted in discrimination. This man wants to go back to law school.

If there was no such regulation in existence when these men offered their services to the country and got their commissions in the army, navy or air force, then until this bill is passed the previous agreement should still hold. I ask the minister to explain what has taken place with regard to the applications of