

National Defence Act Amendment

advantages in a single military service that are not attainable in an integrated three-service system?

Many questions put to the minister have not been adequately answered. In my opinion the bill before us is something written in black and white, but there are many more things that should be found out. There are many witnesses who should be heard, so we will be able then, and only then, to judge whether this plan that the minister proposes is a proper one. I say integration, yes; unification, no.

This policy has been hurried by the minister, and such should not be the case in a matter so vital to our country. The effective defence of Canada is our first duty. We have heard many very good speeches in this debate, and many important points have been raised. Hon. members have asked that this bill be sent immediately to the defence committee before second reading. I think the minister would be wise to do this, so that we would then be able to judge what are the merits of the bill.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am responding to the general desire of the other side of the house to hear me. I was waiting to see whether hon. members opposite wanted to hear me, and I think they are suggesting that I speak now.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Churchill: I rise under a bit of a handicap in entering this defence debate. This afternoon during the question period the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer)—I copied his words down—said that I have only a primitive knowledge of the subject under discussion, and he then went on to say that he would be happy to send me more information. This is the handicap under which I labour, namely that my knowledge of defence matters and this bill is, in the opinion of the minister, primitive. Despite that handicap I thought I would be bold enough to enter this debate.

I have this similarity with the minister: I was once a corporal. When the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch) was speaking yesterday he said there was a story going around about corporals. I quote the words of the hon. member as reported at page 12415 of *Hansard*, when he said that—

—history would show three main troublemakers, one was Corporal Napoleon, one was Corporal Hitler and now it is Corporal Hellyer.

• (6:50 p.m.)

They certainly have been trouble makers; but I would not want any reflection to be cast either on present or past corporals, with the sole exception of those three. I stand here to defend corporals, because the corporal is the mainstay of the army. The officer has the advice of the sergeant major and the sergeants, who have the privilege of talking things over with their superiors; but the corporal is the one to whom orders are given and the one who does the work. His companions, the privates, treat him as one of themselves. In my day the corporal was not a superior person. The sergeant majors, sergeants, and the officers supervise and make the plans on paper, in an armored car, in a cellar or in a dug-out, but the corporal and his section have to go out in front and carry out the orders which they have been given. I am speaking in favour of the corporal and I hope that just because we have had some offenders like Napoleon, Hitler and Hellyer, the rank of corporal will not be downgraded.

On December 7 the minister introduced the bill in a rather lengthy speech, of which he was so proud that he had it reprinted specially, with the addition of photographs, for the edification of the general public and of the people in the services. I have not yet received my copy of that expensive brochure or document, but I notice that his speech filled 19 pages of *Hansard*, 15½ of which were devoted to matters which we have already heard debated before. This constituted the historical summary. It showed us largely what had been done by better ministers of defence before the present minister. These 15½ pages were a repetition of what we had heard in the defence committee and here in the house. The minister was so unenthusiastic about the bill that he devoted only 3½ pages to a discussion of it. He should have concentrated his attention on the bill, which is to be the crowning glory of his career.

We are witnessing a strange series of events in the house. Before Christmas the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) presented us with two or three bills which had to be completed. He had to have the claque of the Liberal party behind him to give him encouragement, and when the bills were passed he rose in the estimation of his party. One of those bills does not even take effect until 1968. Lately we passed a bill in the name of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill). That bill on transportation was his crowning achievement, and he had to get