

*National Defence Act Amendment*

to feel that the minister has gone too far too fast.

Originally when this debate commenced I had not expected to speak. I thought I would leave the speaking to those members with technical knowledge or experience, which to me would seem to be required if one were to make a worth-while contribution. But I now feel I should enter the debate and make my views known in the House of Commons, and I would point out this is the first time for me to speak on the bill.

Some news media have been proclaiming that we on this side of the house should turn over and play dead. They have been proclaiming that we should accept the word of practically one man, the minister, against the evidence of so many retired and discharged senior officers, concluding with the evidence of Air Chief Marshal Miller. They have been proclaiming that closure is justified in order to close the mouths of the official opposition. They have been proclaiming that the implementation of this unification bill is inevitable, so why not capitulate to the stubborn attitude of the minister.

Today we are faced with the house leader having moved closure. Sir, to me this is inexcusable. The defence of Canada is much too important to be decided by the government in this manner. Unfortunately the government has repeatedly shown its contempt of parliament. It is now continuing that contempt, and this time the government has chosen the most important issue we could be faced with, namely the defence of Canada. As I see this whole defence matter, we are taking one step further toward dependence on our great neighbour to the south. In the past the government has taken numerous steps toward republicanism; this step, as I see it, is the biggest and most dangerous.

I feel that certain news media which support the government have tended to confuse the issue by using the words integration and unification interchangeably. This should not be done. They are two different and distinct steps; they have two absolutely different meanings.

Integration has met with general agreement. In fact it was furthered by the government of which I had the honour to be a member. This step, however, does not completely do away with the army, navy and air force, as it is now proposed. That step is what unification means. Integration of certain services and administration facilities seems reasonable and sensible, but to take the big and

dangerous step of completely unifying all our forces does not seem sound. This last move, Mr. Chairman, is against all the advice given by retired and discharged officers. They advised a period of a few years to have steps already taken shake themselves out before taking this last, irrevocable step.

Many times the minister has said that one of his reasons for this move is to save money. Anything to save money should be considered very carefully. Certainly the government has been reckless in its expenditures in all fields, and savings should be encouraged. But that is not what is happening. As has been pointed out on more than one occasion, this year's estimates for national defence are up by approximately \$115 million. Evidence indicates that effective savings will not be effected by unification. I would suggest that we enjoy a pause in this headlong rush.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, the following are the main reasons why unification should not be proceeded with at this time:

The majority of people in Canada are not convinced the minister is right, in fact they are very sure he is wrong.

No other country in the world has dared to take this step. I am for progress, something which was urged by the hon. member for Leeds; but I do not consider this final step of unification at this time to be progress. I consider it foolhardy.

To continue the list of reasons:

Unification can only result in further dependence upon the United States in case of emergency.

There will not be the dollar savings that the minister has wanted us to believe there will be.

Doing away with the army, navy and air force can only cause frustration, discouragement and lack of direction for the soldier, the sailor and the airforce man; in other words, confusion, falling off in efficiency, and demoralization, all of which are dangerous to the security of Canada.

● (9:30 p.m.)

Another reason is that the minister has not answered the pertinent questions which were asked of him concerning the effect unification may have on Canada's commitments.

My last main reason is that the minister has admitted that the act will not be proclaimed for some months. I ask the question: Why, then, the urgency to shove it through in this manner?