

*National Defence Act Amendment*

debate once more at this time in the realization that the government has obviously decided to continue its bulldozer approach to the legislation before us. Democracies move forward slowly. The very reason we suffer the relative tedium of the democratic process of discussion is because we all realize that no government or group of individuals is infallible.

• (3:20 p.m.)

It was Winston Churchill who said that democracy is the worst form of government ever devised by the mind of man, except for all other kinds. It seems to me that our friends on the government side who have decided on the application of closure have agreed with the first part of that thesis, that democracy is the worst form of government ever devised by the mind of man, and they are going to eliminate the processes of a democratic House of Commons that have been going on with reference to this present important issue, notwithstanding the fact that there have been reasonable alternatives put forward to the minister whereby he might achieve some sort of consensus. A consensus in a democratic country is always a relative thing.

I have been in this house for some 16 years and I have found that most of the legislation which has been passed during the period I have been here has been revised three or four times. The minister, however, takes the point of view in respect of this bill that it is absolutely perfect, that all other countries in the western world with follow the pattern that has been laid down by Canada and that this legislation will bring about a great increase in efficiency in our armed forces. In other words, it is the essence of perfection in so far as legislative procedures are concerned.

I submit that this is characteristic of the totalitarian mind. I have read the evidence of the former chief of the defence staff, and that given by the other men who were responsible for the military affairs of this nation less than one year ago. Without exception they have withdrawn their support from this legislation because they believe it is something that is going too far too fast, and that it will endanger Canada's position in the field of national defence. As I have indicated already it is only the minister and the government that have taken the totalitarian point of view that this is the essence of perfection. Throughout the discussion I have marvelled at the ability of the government party to maintain unbroken discipline in the course of the debate. We are

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

dealing with a most serious subject. Obviously there are members on the government who must have serious reservations. The hon. member for Victoria (B.C.) for example, is such a member; but he rationalizes the legislation and says that actually it is no different from integration.

All members of this house agree with integration as it was provided for under the legislation of 1964; yet we are accused of being Colonel Blimpish, of tilting at windmills, and of resisting the process of technological change. These are fine propaganda phrases. I shall in the course of my remarks deal with that particular item. Our friend, the hon. member for Victoria (B.C.) who should be resisting this legislation, rationalizes and says that it is nothing more than integration.

It seems to me that hon. members on the government side have not really read even the explanatory notes in the bill, because I find in these notes the following:

The policy of the government that the three services of the Canadian Forces be unified was stated in the white paper—

And so on. Then in the last sentence of this explanatory note it goes on to say:

Since that time the planning required for the integration process has continued and it is now considered appropriate to proceed to the final goal of a unified defence force for Canada.

That is the aspect of this legislation that was resisted, even at the sacrifice of their careers, by the responsible military leaders of this nation. Then we go to the explanation of clause 2:

The purpose of the amendment to section 15 is to provide that the Canadian Forces will consist of one service called the Canadian Armed Forces, rather than three services as at present.

This is not integration; it is unification or, as it is described on the order paper, amalgamation of the navy, the army and the air force. I submit that this is a revolutionary leap forward and is not the usual manner in which democracies adapt to changing circumstances. It is more in line with the slogan which seems to have replaced the traditional policy of our Liberal friends. They now follow the slogan of power, patronage and perpetuity.

The minister himself has indicated—and it is repeated in the explanatory notes—that he has legislative authority to proceed with the necessary reorganization and now what he wants is a blank cheque to completely change the basis of the organization of the armed forces of Canada. Democratic parliaments do