

*National Defence Act Amendment*

contain this run-away criticism before it does both our countries irreparable harm.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** Mr. Chairman, I wish to take part in this debate again for two reasons. The first is that a number of questions have been put to the government during the course of this and previous stages of the debate which have not been answered. If any answers have been given to most of the questions with which I will deal, they have been given either in a vague way or with equivocation. One reason, and I believe the main reason despite what some members of the government may think, that this debate has gone on so long at the different stages is that there is a genuine desire on the part of the members on this side of the house to find out what exactly are the implications of this bill.

I do not think there is any member in this house, whatever his party, who really would wish to jeopardize our defence effort. All of us are interested in the future safety of our country. Some of us are worried about the course the government is taking. Until we have adequate answers to many of the questions which have been asked I do not believe we will be in a position either to approve or disapprove of this bill. The reason I am making further remarks at this time is that I hope to elicit answers from the minister. I sincerely hope the minister will give us these answers before the debate on this stage of the bill is completed.

The second reason I am taking part in the debate again has to do with the tactical handling of this bill by the government. I believe this to be a matter of very great concern not only to members of this house but also to people outside the house. I suggest that the government has not handled the bill well from its inception. I realize I cannot refer to matters previously passed on by the house and I do not intend to do so. I do wish to refer, however, to the difficulty we have had in acquiring the information we need.

In this regard I suggest it would have been better had the government in the first place sent this bill to a committee, perhaps at the resolution stage, so that the matter could have been gone into at that point. At that stage we might have learned about the nature and content of the bill. Then, at a later stage when the bill came back to the committee of the whole it might again have been referred to the standing committee as was done after second reading. It is quite evident now from a reading of the evidence before the defence

committee that many questions are still unanswered. Had there been two sets of hearings, I believe that some of the points which are still unanswered might have been answered and clarified.

If I may use a favourite expression, this is water under the bridge. This is something which I believe the government should have done. The government has embarked on a very strange course indeed, the course of closure. I know it may be said by my friends on the government side of the house that it is not closure on which the government is embarking now. There is an old expression, "No matter how thin you slice it it is still boloney". This new rule in some ways is a much more severe form of closure than the old closure rule because under the old rule closure had to be applied to each clause of the bill whereas under this arrangement the whole bill has to be dealt with summarily in a very brief period of time. It seems very strange that the government should have embarked on this procedure in dealing with this bill.

As of last Thursday afternoon when the government house leader mentioned it was the intention of the government to allocate time—I believe that is the term which was used—25 members of the official opposition had spoken on this bill and 29 members of the government and its allies in this house. I have been a member of this house for quite a long time and it always has been my impression that when closure or any form thereof was invoked it was because one group in the house was greatly protracting the debate or was holding it up by what sometimes is referred to by members of the government as filibustering. If one wishes to be very technical about this, I might point out that up to the time of the announcement by the house leader 29 members supporting the government had spoken and only 25 opposition members. One might ask who was filibustering.

It seems very strange indeed that this type of procedure should have been adopted. However, that is the government's responsibility. I believe these matters should be clarified. Closure of any form should be used only if a matter is of great urgency or import. I do not think anyone would claim that this subject is not a matter of great import; of course it is, and very much so. However, it certainly is not a matter of urgency, to say the least. The other day the minister told us that if the bill should be passed right now it was not his