

Interim Supply

The minister must find some way of making a series of major policy statements in connection with integration and unification, particularly so far as base consolidation is concerned. He cannot dismiss the fears and concern relating to base closing by saying they are unfounded or simply speculative. That is not enough to allay the fears of those in my area, the 21,653 individuals who are directly employed by the armed services. Something more substantial than that has to be done if those individuals in the Halifax area are to accept the word of the minister.

The municipal officers of Halifax, Dartmouth and the municipality of Halifax intend shortly to arrange a meeting with the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence regarding this matter. I hope the Minister of National Defence will be prepared to allay the fears of these men who have accepted civic responsibility and who are vitally concerned about the suggested closing of H.M.C.S. *Shearwater*. This matter is of vital concern to that area because of the economic impact this closing will have.

Having regard to the policy in respect of the closing of various bases, the government should make some policy statement as to replacement assistance which will be forthcoming. In the Halifax area some 30 per cent of the labour force is vitally concerned with our armed forces. Let me go so far as to say that five years' warning of the closing of this establishment would be precious little time for adjustment. I hope the minister will give some information in this regard to these civic officials when they meet with him regarding the proposed or reported closing of the base at *Shearwater*. I hope the minister is able to allay the fears of these men who are vitally concerned about base consolidation and whether the *Shearwater* base will become part of the base at *Greenwood* or *Summerside*. Surely these spokesmen from Halifax, Dartmouth and the municipality of Halifax are entitled to frank and honest answers in spite of the fact the minister refuses to give us any information in this house and continues to suggest that these rumours are purely speculative. When he is talking to them I hope he will make certain that they leave with no doubts in their minds as to the short and long-term arrangements for this base.

It is apparent as a result of other signposts that major plans are contemplated in respect of defence structure not only in my area but in New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba and elsewhere in the country. These areas must be

examined in relation to the unification policy before any member of this house gives approval in principle. This is true because of the magnitude of this measure and its potential economic impact. It is creating widespread editorial concern and concern among members of the services and other people in areas that may be affected, particularly those where defence spending is a major economic factor. These areas must receive consideration in respect of parallel spending replacements.

The civil servants have received their mid-month salaries. Let me relate that to the general display we observed last week on the part of the government when it—

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Richard): Order, please. I regret to inform the hon. member that his allotted time has expired.

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Chairman, I would be very pleased to sit down if I thought that by doing so this debate would be terminated and we could move to some other order of business. I say this in all sincerity, not knowing precisely what the opposition has in mind. I gather from looking at the opposition whip that I might just as well carry on because there are other members of that party who intend to speak during the debate on interim supply.

We have now devoted the last 11 days to this debate. For the greater part of that time the debate has centred on the question of unification. I had hoped that members of the opposition would have taken advantage of this occasion to debate the principles of unification but unfortunately they have concentrated their remarks on personalities, whether or not the Minister of National Defence is arrogant, modest, ill-advised or intelligent. Certainly very few people in this land know anything more about unification tonight than they did 11 days ago when the opposition decided it had an opportunity to force the hand of the minister on this question.

• (9.30 p.m.)

Interim supply, of course, does provide incidental opportunities for members of the House of Commons to bring to the attention of parliament, and therefore to the Canadian people, problems that may otherwise be overlooked or neglected. For instance, I thought that this afternoon the hon. member for Timmins as a representative from northern Ontario was quite logical in bringing before the committee his views on the principle of the new pipe line that is shortly to unite western and eastern Canada.