

*National Defence Act Amendment*

I said that originally I favoured integration. I have not changed my opinion. Very few people will oppose integration of the pay corps, the medical and dental corps, the chaplain service, the victualling depots, clothing, communication and transportation services. This certainly seems to be the most economical way to provide these services. However, I believe these changes can be achieved with the three services retaining their uniforms and ranks under specific commands.

Up to this point I believe the Minister of National Defence and I are in agreement, but our agreement ceases when he states that integration is only the first step toward establishing a single unified defence force for Canada. I believe that the minister's proposal to place Canada's armed forces in one green uniform will destroy morale. This is an intangible weapon whose force knows no boundaries in any fighting unit. According to all reports, morale is at its lowest ebb today in Canada's armed forces. This is due to the fact that many service personnel are deeply disturbed by the uncertainty which now exists in regard to a service career, and they are unwilling to accept reorganization as they now see it.

● (5:00 p.m.)

I said that morale is an intangible thing and I can cite many examples to prove it. During the second world war it was an easy matter for airmen to get into a first class row with army or navy personnel when they got together. Whether in a restaurant or at any other gathering all they had to do was start singing softly:

Wings over the navy,  
Wings over the sea.  
We're the top of the service,  
The navy's cavalry.

They seldom got beyond that point before a good row was under way with either the army or navy personnel present. This indicates pride of service and uniform. These very people were the first to applaud when the going got tough and the fly-boys came over and gave them cover. At these times they worked together and fought as a unit.

I think the statement by Admiral Mountbatten, when he was asked to express his opinion about a single uniform and rank structure, is worthy of repeating. He said:

In the British reorganization care has been taken to preserve esprit de corps and morale and those traditions which help to maintain this in the services and fighting units.

It has been accepted that to achieve this the three services must retain their uniforms and ranks

with an identifiable professional head of their service. The idea of a single uniform and rank structure was also rejected as undesirable and unnecessary.

There was some talk of taking the uniform and ranks of one service and imposing this on the others but the idea of a man in say army uniform with an army title arriving at a foreign port in command of a warship was generally felt to be so ludicrous that it was not pursued.

The general cut and colour of naval uniforms are internationally so well known that a sailor from any one country can readily be recognized as a sailor in any other country.

Sailors the world over take great pride in this and so in their own services do soldiers and airmen. No compensating advantage could be seen in attempting to impose so unpopular a change.

These are the words of a great British admiral. Surely the minister cannot throw them lightly aside.

Coming closer to home, I should like to quote the words of a gallant rear admiral, now retired from the Canadian navy, on the matter of a single uniform for all three services. On July 8, 1966, Rear Admiral H. F. Pullen wrote to me as follows, and I quote only part of his letter:

It is of the utmost importance that the officers and men in our navy be recognized as members of a naval force wherever they go in the world. The rumours, half-truths, etc., emanating from Mr. Hellyer's office, or from these anonymous spokesmen at national defence headquarters, that suggest the abolition of the present naval uniform and its replacement by some abomination in bottle green, are causing a very great deal of distress, misgiving and uncertainty. Of this I am well aware, and I can produce evidence if necessary.

You and your colleagues will earn the undying gratitude of all of us who have served, and are serving Canada at sea, if you can defeat and destroy the evil designs of Mr. Hellyer and his team.

Those words are not very complimentary to the minister but they are the strong beliefs of a former admiral and I endorse them. I ask hon. members, can all these men be wrong and only one man, the defence minister, right?

I think it is significant that not one of the recently retired senior officers of our three forces has supported the program of unification which will come into effect if this bill is approved. I think it is also significant that everyone of any stature outside the services or the government, whose military opinion could command respect and who testified before the defence committee, has expressed criticism or reservations on the proposed reorganization of the defence establishment.

In all honesty we must ask ourselves who is advising the minister on the course he is