

National Defence Act

this proposal put forward by the government is a good one and that it will take care of some of the obvious difficulties which were encountered in the previous court martial appeal board. We hope that under the new proposed system there will not be the delays which have been experienced in the past. Perhaps we can ask the minister for his assurance in this regard when we are discussing the matter in committee of the whole house.

With reference to the proposed change in name, Mr. Speaker, I can only say that as far as I am personally concerned I like the present French name for the Royal Canadian Air Force and I do not really feel that it should be changed. We would like to have further explanation from the minister as to why this is necessary.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and the house went into committee thereon, Mr. Rea in the chair.

On clause 1—*Establishment of organizations.*

Mr. Benidickson: Mr. Chairman, I want to say just a word or two with respect to an omission in the bill. Since the act is up for revision, and in view of the discussions we had in the estimates committee, it occurs to me that we might have found something in this bill that is not there. I think the members of the estimates committee were all quite surprised to find that this, the largest spending department of the government, was not under this act obligated to submit annually to parliament an annual report. We were surprised about this. We had a look at the record and found that for a great number of years, despite the absence of obligation, an annual report was provided and for most of those years in addition a white paper outlining defence policy, was provided to the house. This white paper was usually provided shortly before the debate on the estimates of the department. We found last summer that for a year and a half we had neither a white paper nor an annual report. I am pleased to know that the minister has already given assurances to the house that this session, prior to discussing the estimates of the department, we will receive a white paper.

We all, of course, want to be economy minded, but I think there would be general agreement in all parties of the house that if perhaps we do not need both documents annually, certainly we should not go through the period that we found we had gone through, namely a year and a half, without getting either. In view of the importance of this department in our budgetary arrangements, I think that information of that kind is well

[Mr. Hellyer.]

worth the expenditure involved. I am pleased that we are getting a white paper but I really do think that, despite the expenditure involved, this of all departments should not be one which, because it is not mandatory under the statute, should avoid presenting to the house, to the country and to the great number of people interested, an annual report.

Mr. Hellyer: Can the minister give us some indication of what further branches of the armed forces he hopes to unify in the near future?

Mr. Pearkes: This amendment will give legal authority for the unification of any of the branches of the forces which at any time in the future may be considered desirable. All this amendment does is to ask for that legal authority. We are reviewing from time to time the advisability of carrying out such integration or unification as may be required in the various different services.

Mr. Hellyer: The minister does not have anything in mind for immediate presentation at this time?

Mr. Pearkes: Steps are being taken continually but I do not think there is any further information which I can give at the present time.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 2 agreed to.

On clause 3—*Rules of evidence.*

Mr. Hellyer: Can the minister give us any further explanation of clause 3?

Mr. Pearkes: New rules of evidence are being prepared which will cover all aspects of the laws of evidence which normally arise in connection with courts martial. As the hon. member realizes, the rules of evidence in the various provinces are not all uniform. Therefore, it is considered desirable, as the service personnel move from one province to another, to have a uniform code of evidence and that will be published and circulated to all concerned.

Mr. Hellyer: On which province would the rules of evidence be based? Does the minister have information on this?

Mr. Pearkes: We are preparing a codification of the laws of evidence. It will be applicable to all service personnel no matter where they are serving, whether in a province of Canada or overseas.

Mr. Hellyer: Does the minister not think that these laws of evidence should have been included in the bill so that we could have had a chance to look at them?