

*National Defence Act Amendment*

am concerned about members of our armed forces who joined the army, navy or air force under what they felt was a two-way agreement. Now the minister can transfer them compulsorily into what is to be known as the Canadian armed forces. I believe that those who now belong to the services and who fulfil the present requirements should have the privilege of getting out on six months' notice if they so wish.

I was interested in the speech made by the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings. It was a long speech and I should like to put it all on the record again but time will not allow me to do so. He asked several questions which the minister should answer. I will read part of what my hon. friend said as reported in *Hansard* at pages 14944 and 14945. This passage illustrates a few of the problems the minister will encounter in dealing with the officers and men of our armed services. Once this bill is passed the minister will have serious difficulties on his hands. He may think he has had a problem dealing with the official opposition but it is only a foretaste of what will happen within the armed forces once this bill is enacted. I am afraid of what will happen to the defence of Canada as soon as the minister tries to implement a measure which will not work. This is what the hon. member said:

I want to tell the minister that I have had letters from many serving officers, not colonels or commodores but flight lieutenants and petty officers. I have four or five of them in my hand now. Within the last two weeks these people have been told that they cannot get out of the service.

I should like to know on what authority they have been told they cannot leave the service. They have an agreement, which I understand is valid at least until the passing of this bill, enabling them to get out after six months notice. What power had the minister or the government to cancel this agreement? I can understand that after the bill is passed the government will have firmer ground on which to stand with respect to these applications. But at the present time there is a two-way agreement and I believe that if these men submit their applications they have a good basis on which to fight their case. Regardless of what the judge advocate general told us when we were in committee, I believe these men would be on firm ground and I would suggest to all of them that, though it might be costly, they fight their cases on this legal ground. I am not a lawyer, but if I were in that position I would contribute to the funds of those who wanted to fight their cases. This is a freedom for which they fought and

[Mr. McIntosh.]

I say that neither the minister nor the government has the authority to take it away.

My hon. friend said these applicants had been told:

There is no longer the problem of transferring between the services because you do not have services now.

I say we do have services now and we shall continue to have them until the bill now before us is passed. Whoever wrote those letters had no authority to do so in those terms. There was no legal ground for sending such a reply as these people apparently received. It went on: "You now transfer from one environment to another". This will not be the case until after the passage of the bill before us. And further: "We are not a warlike country now, we are a peace keeping country". Many of the officers and men who make these applications forget that for some reason they are still considered as being on active service, and this has been the case since the Korean war. I cannot help wondering why this provision was never cancelled. My hon. friend went on to say in the course of his remarks on April 14:

I think it was Moncel or Fleury who said that in his day, according to his terminology, peace keeping meant preventing war or fighting a war. Today, as I said before, we do not have services, or we will not have if this bill is passed. We have environments and interchange within environments. I should like the minister to stand up and deny the fact that there has been a freeze on the release of officers who under normal circumstances would be qualified to obtain their release—

● (12:50 p.m.)

I do not know whether the minister has made that denial or whether he intends to do so, but I believe that all applications for release made prior to the passing of this bill should be honoured. I think these people have made a reasonable request. I repeat that they joined a voluntary service. Now they are aware that they are in a compulsory service. They do not wish to remain with that type of service any longer and I expect that being young in years they are recently out of college or university and want to make preparation for their future lives. I do not think it is morally right for the minister to stop these people from taking up the occupations or professions they wish to follow.

These people have seen a lifetime vocation in voluntary service disappear. They want nothing to do with a compulsory service. The minister should let them get out so they may return to university if they so wish and become professional men. The hon. member went on to say:

I will not read the names of these people because they are still serving officers.