

National Defence Act Amendment

The hon. member for Kootenay East praised the work of the committee. I can understand that; he was one of its members. Nevertheless there was so much bias shown in that committee—and this applies to nine out of ten committees of this house and the work they turn out—that, for the people of Canada, its work was almost useless. This parliament will never function properly until we have committees before which witnesses can testify properly and which bring in reports not biased politically.

Take as an example the committee on Indian affairs and northern development. All the minister had to do was say something ought to happen, pull his strings, and the Liberal members would support him. That sort of thing has happened again and again in our committees. The hon. member for Kootenay East may laugh, but he knows what I say is absolutely true. If parliament is to function properly, if we are to present before it important legislation, some means must be found to reflect in this house the feelings of our people. As matters now stand too much political bias enters parliament's deliberations.

I now turn briefly to other matters. I have already talked about the evidence concerning unification. That evidence shows that unification is not a good thing. By expunging the biased statements of the minister, the hon. member for Kootenay East and others like him, and reading the evidence of persons such as Air Chief Marshal Miller who were in the position to speak their minds, and did so, one will find that the weight of evidence goes against the minister. Unification of the armed forces is shown to be undesirable.

When the integration bill was introduced I said nothing against it, believing as an economist that certain benefits would flow from it. This is not so with unification, which is vastly different. It has taken us a long time to fathom what was in the minister's mind when he spoke of unification.

I believe firmly that the navy, the army and air force ought to be separate. All countries of the world have three fighting forces. So far, maintaining three separate forces has been found to be the most effective method of maintaining military strength. This minister, unlike defence ministers of other countries, is tampering with the defence forces of Canada. He wishes to obliterate the navy, army and air force by merging them into one hill of beans, with all personnel wearing the same

[Mr. Kindt.]

type of uniform. By so doing the minister will destroy service traditions.

In former years people volunteered for the navy, army or air force because they liked the tradition of the service they were about to join. During the first world war I tried to join the 137th battalion from Calgary, but could not because I was not of age. The record of that battalion had attracted me, as it had attracted others. The same thing is true about the air force and navy. Some are attracted by their traditions, and join. If those traditions are lost, buried or obliterated, as the minister intends, then an irreparable injustice will have been done to the fighting forces of this country.

In closing, let me say to the minister that he should have conducted himself as the Minister of Transport conducted himself during the debate on the transportation bill. The Minister of National Defence ought to have kept an open mind and listened to the views of different people. Instead of that his mind has been closed. He has not yielded on one point. Personally, I think this bill ought to be sent back to the committee for amendment. No bill entailing the far reaching consequences of this one ought to be passed in its present form. It ought to be amended to preserve for the time being at any rate the army, navy and air force to protect the \$1.7 billion our taxpayers are paying.

Unless the minister is prepared to make concessions by adhering to the will of the people of this country, he has no alternative but to resign.

Mr. Monteith: Mr. Chairman, I have not been a member of the defence committee. I have not had the opportunity and privilege of hearing all evidence presented to that committee, nor has it been possible for me to read it all. There are various reasons for this, the main one being that as a fairly active member of the finance, trade and economic affairs committee which was considering the Bank Act over many months, it was impossible for me to absorb everything that went on in the defence committee. But despite my lack of technical study and knowledge concerning Bill C-243 I could not help over the last several weeks coming to certain conclusions.

• (9:20 p.m.)

I was in my constituency last week end, and on that occasion and previously had many conversations which indicated to me that the people are worried. They are inclined