

National Defence Act Amendment

In any event the minister was getting a lot of free publicity. If that was the reason he allowed that idea to circulate then he obviously had no concern for the armed forces and was using his position only as a stepping stone or for political expediency. If that is the position—prime minister.

The minister knew that his statements were just a play on words designed to deliberately create confusion and in many cases unnecessary fears. What did he do to those officers who had served for a lifetime in the armed forces when he forced them to retire because they would not agree to something they could not understand? The minister could not make them understand because he did not know what he meant. I am sure he does not know what he means by unification. This was a word which obtained a lot of publicity for him. He continued to utter it time and time again.

As a result of this obvious play on the word "unification" the minister has perpetrated a gigantic hoax on the people of Canada, the armed forces and the parliament of Canada. This is the greatest hoax ever played by any minister in this or any other parliament. What is perhaps even more dangerous is that he has endangered the security of this nation. He has endangered this nation by dismissing or forcing the early retirement of a number of senior officers.

The minister in my opinion deliberately misled the Canadian public when he said some time ago in Edmonton that this issue involved civil control over the military.

Mr. Hellyer: Hear, hear.

Mr. McIntosh: I ask the minister to get up at this time and deny that he made that statement.

Mr. Churchill: No, he now confirms it.

Mr. Hellyer: I said it, Mr. Speaker, and I meant it.

Mr. McIntosh: The Canadian people are entitled to know if at any time during the minister's term of office there was a deliberately planned coup by the senior officers of any of our services. He owes this house and the Canadian people an explanation in respect of the statement he has now confirmed. What military control did the officers want to take over civilians? I think this is something that has to be explained in the house before discussion on this bill is completed.

[Mr. McIntosh.]

● (4:00 p.m.)

Mr. Churchill: Make him answer it now.

Mr. McIntosh: The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) says, "Make him answer it now."

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. member a question? Has not the minister, by the answer he gave just a minute ago, cast a very serious reflection upon the officers and men in our services, namely, that they were trying to gain control over the civilian authority in this land? That is the reflection he cast upon our serving officers and men.

An hon. Member: Is that a question?

Mr. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, up to this time I was not sure whether the minister had made that statement in Edmonton although it had been reported in the press. Today all hon. members present heard the minister when he rose and repeated that statement. I agree with the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre that it is a serious statement. It does cast a reflection upon all officers now serving in the armed forces and in particular upon those who left under a cloud, as it were.

Mr. Hellyer: It was directed to one.

Mr. McIntosh: Tell us who that one is.

Mr. Hellyer: You know who it is.

Mr. McIntosh: We do not know who it is. You told us you knew.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. If we are to have orderly debate it means that the hon. member will make his speech and the minister will eventually reply to speeches made, closing the debate.

Mr. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, it has been suggested that the minister has not produced any proof for his statement, and I believe this house is entitled to some proof. I have only a few moments left so I will let one of my colleagues deal with this phase of the matter when I have finished. The minister is primarily responsible for the present uncertainties, insecurity and lack of confidence he has caused to develop because of the issue of unification.

As I said before, the minister will be responsible for the ridicule that will be directed at us when other nations realize that unification is a myth that existed only in the minister's mind. I doubt that it does exist in the minister's mind because I do not think he