

*National Defence Act Amendment*

It is signed, "A corporal from London, Ontario". I will not say the name, but he has been in the armed forces for 18 years. My friend was asking me if I would vote against the bill now. These are the only two communications I have received, one from London, Ontario, and the other one from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

*[Translation]*

In my province, Mr. Chairman, we did not receive a single letter or telegram suggesting that we should vote one way or the other. In Quebec, we have the Royal 22nd which is, I think, a rather important and illustrious regiment in the Canadian army, and although we are told today about experts in the Canadian army who are fighting Bill No. C-243, there are others who are not fighting it.

General Allard is not opposed to it. Some may say that General Allard is in favour of unification because he is the commander in chief of the Canadian armed forces. We can impute motives to him, Mr. Chairman, but we can also impute motives to those who hold different views.

We live in a democratic country and we certainly have the right to be against this measure. The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) has the right to oppose Bill No. C-243, but we have just as much right to be in favour of this bill. We have reasons for approving this bill, just as the hon. member has reasons for being against it.

Personally, I see one Canadian army, not three. I see one Canadian army as a Canadian family, with a father, a mother and 10 children. The 10 children, sir, will not all become lawyers, or businessmen; they will not all get into the same trade; no. Each of the 10 children will go his own way, but will nevertheless remain within the same family; that is a unified family.

What prevents the people in the air force, the army or the navy from being part of a single force while remaining in the land army, the air force or the navy? Nothing whatsoever, Mr. Chairman.

I suggest all this is a tempest in a teapot; somebody is trying to turn the matter of the Canadian army into a clearly and purely political matter. Now, the Canadian army must stay above political matters or considerations. The Canadian army is neither Conservative nor Liberal nor Social Credit; the Canadian army is the army of the Canadian people. It is the army of all Canada. This

[Mr. Caouette.]

army belongs to the Canadian people and not to the government. The present government may change in a year or two; it will be followed by another which will possibly be changed four years later, whereas the Canadian army will last regardless of political considerations or changes of government.

The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre is perfectly aware of what I say and he knows I am right in speaking as I do.

When his government was in power, pressures were then exerted to unify the Canadian armed forces. If this government were still in power now, it would probably have to introduce a bill which might not be Bill No. C-243 but possibly Bill No. C-995 but which would propose exactly what the government or the Canadian armed forces are now asking.

Look at what is going on across Canada. The hon. member knows that the present debate is of no interest anywhere in Canada, neither in his own constituency nor in my own, neither in Montreal nor in Toronto.

Yesterday I met prominent citizens of Toronto, people who had military service in Canada and who support the unification of the Canadian forces into one army.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Caouette:** Mr. Chairman, I did not understand what the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) said.

**Mr. Mongrain:** You haven't missed a thing.

**Mr. Caouette:** So, I haven't missed a thing.

*[English]*

**Mr. Dinsdale:** I asked the hon. gentleman if he met the people from Toronto who were not in favour of unification?

**Mr. Caouette:** I will be very frank with the hon. member and say that up until now I have never met anyone from Toronto who was against this Bill No. C-243.

**Mr. Dinsdale:** Have you met the members of TRIO? They seem to be against it and they are based in Toronto.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Caouette:** Mr. Chairman, I do not deny the fact just referred to by the hon. member. I do not dispute it. It may be true. But with those I have met from Toronto yesterday, it was not a question of finding out whether they were Conservatives or Liberals or Social