

*National Defence Act Amendment*

from speeches or writings of various distinguished gentlemen, but I do not think much can be gained by taking something out of context and just quoting it; and essentially that is what the hon. member did. I should like to say at this point that I disagree completely and absolutely with the statement he attributed to Mr. John Gellner to the effect that ministers of defence of the past were, in effect, captives of their military advisers, and that defence problems during those periods were looked at in isolation in each service, with no co-ordination of effort.

This is, Mr. Speaker, without doubt completely false. It is certainly false as far as I was concerned. I know it is incorrect as far as General Pearkes was concerned. I am also absolutely certain, knowing the gentlemen and something of what they did from my experience in the department, that this is completely untrue as far as Mr. Campney and Mr. Claxton were concerned. Certainly Colonel Ralston and Senator Power showed their independence sufficiently, by their resignations from the cabinet to which they belonged at that period, to make it quite clear that they were making up their own minds and were not the captives of their military advisers.

In this respect I think that all the gentlemen I have mentioned, as well as myself, during the periods we were ministers of defence of this country did listen to the advice of the senior military officers, and on the basis of that advice, and taking into consideration political facts, financial demands and matters of that sort, we came to a decision as to the course of action to be followed.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the present minister has not followed that very wise course but has disregarded the advice of his senior officers, as demonstrated by the fact that practically all of them have now resigned or been fired, as the case might be.

I think there is no question that any reasonable method of carrying on defence activities and defence policy in any country must be based on the general course that has been followed up to the present time, such as for example weighing the advice of senior military officers, and other factors concerned, and then coming to a conclusion on that basis, rather than disregarding these officers and, if they disagreed with you, firing them or otherwise getting rid of them.

The hon. member for Leeds tried to demonstrate that a considerable number of distinguished military leaders of the United States were all for a single unification system. But

[Mr. Harkness.]

the actual fact is that the United States has not gone for a single unified force. The hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) put on the record this afternoon a considerable amount of evidence from Mr. Zuckert, who for several years was secretary of the air force in the United States, as to why, although he himself had been convinced for years that complete unification was the answer after several years of experience he found it was not the answer, and that it was unwise to proceed with it. This again is another matter to which I shall refer in dealing with some of the points made by the minister in his speech.

I had started out to say, Mr. Speaker, that in my view a consideration of this whole matter must start with the roles or objectives of the defence force you want to create, or which you have in existence, and how they can be fulfilled. In actual fact, during recent months there have been very grave doubts about what are the minister's and the government's end objectives in defence. There is a widespread belief that while the minister pays lip service to the defence objectives followed for many years past, and which are set out in the 1964 defence white paper, his real objective is to run down our defence forces so that in the end they will consist of nothing much more than a type of police force which would be able to carry out certain United Nations peace keeping activities but very little more than that. Certainly it would be unable to meet the other stated objectives of our defence policy.

This suspected position of the government, if I may call it that, was stated in fairly bald terms in an editorial in the *Ottawa Citizen* for November 5, which as everyone knows is one of the papers which very strongly supports the government. Its editor, Mr. Young, is known to have close ties both with the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) and other members of the government, so therefore I think it is reasonable for us to suspect that to a very considerable extent his utterances and editorials reflect the thinking of the government, or some of the most important people in the government.

● (8:40 p.m.)

The editorial reads as follows:

The evident strategic doctrine contemplated by the government is to set up a mobile force of land, sea and air services that could be moved quickly to any part of the world to undertake either a UN peacekeeping obligation, or to help fight a brush fire war on NATO's behalf.