

National Defence Act Amendment

and oppose the measures proposed by the minister. We still believe that in the light of modern conditions this is a commendable, satisfactory and logical position to take in the re-organization of our forces.

One reason suggested for unification was economy of operation. Some members of the house during this debate went to great lengths in an endeavour to prove that economies would not result. I have not gone into this particular matter, but the minister has said that economies have and will be effected. I suppose the only thing we can do is wait and see, and then make a judgment.

Mr. Churchill: May I ask the hon. gentleman a question?

Mr. Patterson: Yes.

Mr. Churchill: Would the hon. gentleman compare the estimates from year to year, which show there has been no decline in expenditures, or savings as a result of this policy.

Mr. Patterson: Perhaps that is the case, but we must recognize the fact that the minister has already stated that we would save money so far as administration was concerned, but that money would be used to update our equipment. When that has been achieved it is hoped there will be a saving. Even if we just update our equipment in this way, I think this is a worth-while step so far as the operations of our defence forces are concerned.

Perhaps many members of this house, if not all, will agree that this policy is desirable and worth while from the standpoint of administration. In the final analysis this is a proposal which is somewhat commensurate with Canada's resources. We must admit that we have a relatively small population and do not have the tremendous resources which would enable us to move into the big league, as it were. We must therefore fulfil the vital and important role to which we can adapt our forces.

Mr. Winch: Specialized, though.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, that would be right.

I believe that this bill embodies a move in the right direction, and in conclusion I should like to ask the minister to clarify for us, for the people of Canada and for the armed forces what the role of the Canadian Armed Forces will be in the future. If we can obtain the answer to that question perhaps we can more intelligently discuss this whole matter of national defence.

[Mr. Patterson.]

The special committee has its work cut out. Reference has been made to the attempt to put this bill before the committee before second reading. At that time, commencing on that suggestion, I stated that would be contrary to the usual procedure of this house, but I also said perhaps this is one instance when we should depart from usual procedure. Perhaps by doing so we might have allayed the fears of those who are apprehensive about this whole program of unification. We trust that as a result of the studies to be conducted by the committee when this bill is referred to it, the information gleaned and the recommendations made, an effective program will be developed which will safeguard and promote the freedom and integrity of not only Canada but the entire free world.

Mr. John R. Matheson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to speak after the hon. member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Patterson). I was pleased that he referred in the course of his remarks to the visit by the veterans affairs committee to many of the battlefields in Europe. It was certainly my conclusion, after the briefings we received in places such as the Somme, Dieppe, Arnhem, the Normandy beachhead, Mount Cassino and Ortona, that military science is constantly in the process of change. If we are to progress and accomplish those high aims for which our armed forces were established, namely the maintenance of peace, we must constantly re-examine basic issues and have the courage to deal with them.

• (6:50 p.m.)

There was the suggestion in the remarks of my hon. friend that the Minister of National Defence has not been frank. To me this is, with respect, a ludicrous assertion. I wonder when in the history of Canada, even during the period of the two wars, Canadians have ever received as much information with respect to defence as was given to this house on December 7, 1966, in the lengthy, detailed, almost exhaustive statement of the Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Winch: It is what was left out that bothers us.

Mr. Matheson: I wonder when in the period prior to 1963 we ever heard between 100 and 200 extraordinarily able people of this country, and elsewhere, giving evidence on defence matters. Where else has any group of parliamentarians been able to hear defence