

National Defence Act Amendment

During a similar debate, that on the adoption of a distinctively Canadian flag, a lot of interest was stirred up right across Canada, and we received hundreds and thousands of letters from all over the country, asking us to take such or such an attitude, but we find no similar interest in the case of the unification bill. People do not write in about this.

Yesterday at noon, I addressed the Ottawa West Rotary Club, English speaking people, businessmen, professionals, industrialists. They are definitely disgusted with the time lost here in parliament by the extension of this debate, through repetitions without, however, any clear and precise solution to the problem.

We are studying Bill No. C-243. All its clauses were studied by the committee on national defence where every member had the right to attend, where he could discuss, and express his viewpoint. Everyone interested in the matter went there. Back in the house, we will have to go back once more to the committee. The discussion here is as long as it was in committee. Later, in committee, it will be as long as it was here. The bill will come back for third reading and we will no doubt discuss it again, repeating once more what we have heard for a month and a half. In the meantime, the Canadian people are paying for that loss of time.

Mr. Chairman, yesterday I proposed the adjournment of the business of the house to discuss a definite subject namely the problems of the dairy industry. All the Conservative and Liberal members should have supported the motion to change the debate and discuss a matter concerning an important sector of the Canadian economy, namely agriculture. Instead of that, we carried on the debate on Bill No. C-243. There are pros and cons. Some are afraid of closure, others are afraid to lose votes in their ridings.

I was saying that the Canadian people were not very much interested in this matter. In fact, I received one telegram and one letter. The telegram was from London, and the letter from Winnipeg—probably from the riding of my excellent friend, the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill)—and I quote:

● (4:00 p.m.)

[*English*]

Dear Mr. Caouette,

I cannot understand why unification of armed forces must proceed. It almost sounds like "peace at any price" of those who appease war-makers. If it is clearly so good why do great numbers of

taxpayers, students, armed service personnel (of long practical experience) oppose the plan and its consequences of Canada having no effective fighting force to defend Canada first?

How can one possibly believe the idea money will be saved except by combining, say, postal and health services? Without competition between fighting regiments (or their sports) how can their morale possibly be as good? Until these and other dangers stated and unstated are settled carefully would it not be safer for Canada to vote no? Keep up the constructive work you do as a fighter for freedom with responsibility and private enterprise.

I will not mention the name, but the letter comes from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Mr. Churchill: Will you vote against the bill now, having received that?

Mr. Caouette: Pardon?

Mr. Churchill: Will you vote against the bill, having received that letter?

Mr. Caouette: Well, I have a telegram which—

Mr. Churchill: It is very sound advice.

Mr. Caouette: Yes, it is very sound advice. I have a telegram here which is a little clearer. It is dated April 18, which was last night. I should like to read it:

Mr. Réal Caouette
Social Credit Rally Leader,
Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

Dear Sir: I am not a Social Crediter—

He may be a Conservative.

Mr. Churchill: A wise man.

Mr. Caouette: Yes.

—but I think that you have the interest of the Canadian people at heart, so would you please use your influence in trying to get this unification bill through.

Mr. Churchill: He is a Liberal.

Mr. Caouette: I continue:

I am a veteran of 18 years of service—

Just as many years as my hon. friend.

—and I would say that 85 to 90 per cent like I are in favour of this unification bill so would you please help to keep us together. We have full confidence in our Minister of Defence, Mr. Hellyer.

Mr. Horner (Acadia): It sounds as though Bill Lee sent that telegram.

Mr. Caouette: The telegram reads:

We have confidence in our Minister of Defence, Mr. Hellyer.