

*National Defence Act Amendment*

unification. Some of us on the committee also wanted to make some comments and ask some questions on the basis of the evidence that was then before the committee. But no, Mr. Chairman, back to the house came the estimates without comment. We then had that performance of last fall when, arising out of the mid-summer crisis with all the firings and resignations, there was a steadfast refusal to discuss the matter, to send it back to the committee so as to find out why it had all happened.

I have been a member of this committee since 1963 and, having sat on defence committees or defence estimates committees previously, I thought that we had a very fine committee in 1963-64. The report which was then presented was of assistance to the government. A non-partisan co-operation among members of the committee was established. People got to know about military affairs, and this state of affairs continued until last year.

The ill-considered action of June, 1966 caused this committee to adopt a partisan division. The same thing has happened on this question of unification. Having insisted upon a vote on second reading in this house when the principle was accepted, the government members might as well have gone off to the Caribbean for all they cared because they were not going to change their minds. They are committed by their vote in this house. And, may I say, so are the members of the opposition.

That is the nonsense of the situation, Mr. Chairman. The man responsible for it is the minister who insisted that this bill be accepted in principle before any witnesses were heard. It would have been so much easier and so much better for the future of the defence committee if the bill had been discussed prior to its acceptance on second reading.

May I say to the committee that the government members went through some education in military matters during the committee hearings. At times they were left a little short in numbers as the platoon went back and forth. Some members who presumably were asked to vote on the clauses of this bill had sat on the committee for less than two weeks and had not heard a fifth of the evidence. They did not have available to them the transcripts of the evidence but they voted right down the line.

Was this an intelligent vote? I cannot accept it as such, not on the basis of the evidence that was put before the committee by bona fide witnesses, men who were reluctant

to come before the committee but wished to assist the house in arriving at what they felt was the right decision for our armed services. Those men have a great deal of heart and feeling for our armed services; yet they have seen the question handled in this perfunctory and preordained fashion. I think that this action that was shown was a great disservice done to our armed forces.

● (5:50 p.m.)

It was obvious this afternoon that there has been a great deal of confusion between the terms integration and unification. Sometimes they have been deliberately confused while at other times the confusion has arisen as a result of sheer ignorance. I must say I was surprised when I read the minister's comments about the press and the way they handled the unification debate and the testimony before the committee. I am not sure that the government would necessarily appreciate what he had to say about the press. Perhaps some of his colleagues will have other comments to make.

In any event, I read an article in this morning's *Globe and Mail* in which it was stated that the minister told the Young Liberals that the controversy over unification became inevitable once power groups, retired officers and service organizations, took public positions on the issue. That is the first item with which I want to deal. Is the minister the only one who is entitled to take issue on this question of unification? Why should not retired officers, who know far more about it than he does, as well as service organizations and the public, take part in the discussion of this issue? I suppose members opposite who take a view different from that of the minister will become power groups.

The article reads in part:

He said some of these views were the result of genuine concern over the problems, while others were fostered by special interests.

Let him spell out these special interests or does he too share the opinion of the chief of staff that those of us who do not share his view in this regard have ulterior motives? Our concern about the armed services is just as sound, just as bona fide as that of the minister. He has no monopoly on this concern. These ulterior motives that are inferred at will contribute nothing to the advancement of the debate in this house.

The minister had something to say about editorial writers, and particularly an editorial that appeared in last Saturday's *Globe and*