

*National Defence Act Amendment*

those questions on which it is its duty to decide before granting supply. The suggestion that this is a method which has been followed for 400 years is sheer hypocrisy and I am amazed at the hon. member's effrontery in making such a suggestion to the house.

I think that the approach of the minister has been very consistent, as evidenced by the statements made by various individuals and organizations who have taken exception to the minister's actions. Their statements have been founded on a sincere and firm belief that the defence of this country is too important to be trifled with and that when drastic changes are to be made which have such a far-reaching effect on morale, on the status of the forces and on our security, not to mention the financial implications, the fullest information should be supplied so that all those who are concerned can see for themselves that the matter has been fully studied, that all necessary information has been made available and that the best minds have discussed it thoroughly. All the information has not been divulged to us. All we have is a barrage of propaganda and the bland assurance of the minister that all is well.

I was not surprised to hear the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Matheson), who has come to the minister's defence so often, assure the house that any suggestion that full information has not been forthcoming is nonsense. As he said, the amount of information which the minister has provided to the house is stupendous. In other words, how can we say we do not have information when the Minister of National Defence has been willing to give it to us and in fact has given us more information than anyone else? The hon. member for Leeds told us to look at the great number of appearances which the minister made before the committee and at the great number of questions he has answered. Let me say in reply that I do not think anyone in the house is prepared to accept the minister's testimony on anything as being of any value or accuracy. In fact, after having witnessed his tampering with evidence we must even suspect his motives. I for one have to say about the minister what I have never said about any other minister of the crown, that I cannot in all conscience accept any information pertaining to defence which he gives to the house as being helpful to us. I am suspicious of it and in fact will reject it until such time as he should decide to submit to trial on the charges which he now faces and attempts to clear his name as any hon. member should.

[Mr. Nugent.]

I do not wish to return to the debate we had on this subject. The important point is for everyone in the country to realize that the minister's critics are concerned and feel they do not have enough information. For example, the Tri-Service Identities Organization, in a letter written to members of parliament stated in the last paragraph:

We hope that you will support us in our objective of a commission type of inquiry but, as a preliminary step, the Minister of National Defence should be persuaded to follow the rational and democratic process of reconvening the defence committee before the unification bill is presented. We hope you will agree that an issue as vital as national defence deserves a thorough and open nonpartisan approach.

The minister labels these critics as a bunch of admirals trying to take over. His answer in the house indicated that the cause of the whole difficulty is that the top service personnel find themselves unable to grant to the government ultimate authority over the armed services, and he would have us believe that there is some sort of plot whereby the top service personnel are attempting to dictate to the government. I think such an approach is a reprehensible one and a studied insult to those people who have devoted their lives to defence. Certainly this is not the only insult which he has thrown at most of the top personnel who have found that they had to resign rather than go along with the minister's reckless plans.

The Air Force Officers' Association, which is composed of people who deserve the confidence of this nation as well as our gratitude for the services they rendered in the last two world wars, has written asking for certain information. They have asked for an explanation of what is meant by unification and integration. I think that this type of approach to the question of defence demonstrates the spirit in which the House of Commons has always acted until the advent of this minister, namely, an inquiring mind, a search for information and a real concern for the welfare of the country rather than solely the personal glorification of the Minister of National Defence.

In its brief the Navy League of Canada demonstrates exactly the same sort of attitude. Although we can understand that they have every reason to consider that the minister should be condemned out of hand for his character and conduct, for the way in which he had treated the armed forces and for the confusion which he has brought to this country, their brief indicates a simple search for information. This is obvious in the concluding