

*National Defence Act Amendment*

maritime air forces. Realizing the advantages to be gained by the closest co-operation between sea and air components and discharging a common task, the operations of maritime air and the navy were fully integrated some ten years ago. In both Halifax and Esquimalt for nearly a decade our operations staffs, our planners, intelligence staffs, our meteorologists, oceanographers, operational researchers and communications have worked in an integrated organization—

I want to emphasize this, Mr. Speaker.

—so that the move toward total integration was neither strange nor unreal and was really only felt in the logistics and administration branches of my headquarters.

I think we can take it for granted, Mr. Speaker, that the policy of integration is inevitable. It is certainly my belief, from reading all the documents, books and records on which I could lay my hands, that integration appears to be the only way to remove duplication, triplication, and unnecessary expense, thereby bringing about a saving to the taxpayer and, I believe, a far greater efficiency in the operation and organization of our armed forces.

However, the matter of unification is far more complicated to consider than is integration. I wish to express my firm belief that in advancing the policy of unification the minister, on behalf of the government, appears to have made three major mistakes, and I outline them as follows. First, he did a poor public relations job, leaving nothing but confusion in the minds of the forces of the elected representatives and of the people, thereby unnecessarily antagonizing them. Second, he has been too dogmatic and dictatorial in introducing changes and new policies which could far better have been left to develop of themselves in the natural course of events. Third—and this is the final and most important point—he has not outlined in any way whatsoever the basic and fundamental decision as to the future role of the Canadian Armed Forces.

We maintain that it is absolutely unreasonable to expect us to arrive at an understanding of what the government has in mind. How can we have a knowledge of the meaning of unification if the government does not outline the basic future role of the Canadian Armed Forces in world affairs? This was completely lacking in the 65-page presentation made by the minister.

I should like to elaborate on the three points I have just enumerated, the three main mistakes made by the minister. There can be no question whatsoever about the poor public

[Mr. Winch.]

relations on the part of the minister and his department with regard to members of the House of Commons on a bill as important as this one is and which has such far-reaching affects. The refusal to refer the bill to the standing committee on defence prior to its passage on second reading was a very poor decision. I endorse completely all that was said by the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) when he pointed out that the bill should have been sent to the committee. It is absolutely unfair and unreasonable to ask the house to pass this bill on second reading, thereby adopting it in principle, before it is referred to the committee on defence. This is poor public relations for which we can only blame the minister.

He is just about the most unco-operative minister I have ever met. He insists on everything being a *fait accompli*. This has certainly been our experience in the defence committee of which I have been a member ever since it was first established. We have never been given the opportunity to offer advice, to go over the plans or to give consideration to what the minister or the government had in mind. Oh no, it has always had to be a *fait accompli*. It comes to the standing committee when the minister has made up his mind and it is almost impossible to try to get him to change it. Not only has there been poor public relations vis-à-vis the committee on defence but the same has been true with regard to members in the house. The minister has said that we jolly well have to vote for the bill and support its principle—therefore we have to support the principle of unification—before he will permit the bill to be considered by the committee on defence. He has been here long enough to know that when a bill has been endorsed in principle it makes it much more difficult to make any changes in it in committee.

The minister seems to have an aptitude for antagonizing members in the house and members in the committee. There certainly have been poor public relations as evidenced by the fact that for three years people have not known what was in the mind of the minister. In all the years before the bill was introduced there has been confusion as to ranks, as to pay and as to whether members of the armed forces could be moved from the navy to the air force, to the army. Unnecessary confusion has reigned, all of which could have been avoided if the minister had received proper advice from those who are supposed to be expert in the field of public relations.