

*National Defence Act Amendment*

failure to explain fully and properly the meaning of this clause is nothing more or less than a deliberate attempt to gloss over its very serious and far reaching implications.

I am not prepared simply to look at the word "transitional", to accept it and move on to the next clause. It is my hope that in the course of the remarks we may make on this clause the minister might give second thought to what is happening. As I read the clause and analyse it, I find the government is indeed saying to our 103,000 serving personnel "You are being transferred. You are fine, decent chaps; you know we have your best interests at heart, but just go along with our plan." In effect it says to them "Come along with us and we will look after you. The days of the identifiable services are gone, but have no particular fears about the new force. We will give you nothing at all to worry about. You will be there all right, but you will be there simply because we have decided. We will take care of you."

This is an abandonment of the very essence of the structure of our force, that is its voluntary nature. Every flag officer, every general, every air marshal and every commissioned officer is being told to burn his commission or toss it into the wastepaper basket. Since each was commissioned into only one of the three services, they are in effect being ordered to join the new force, and to accept something which is not part of the commission they originally accepted. Every officer and every man has been attested into the service of his choice, but he is now being attested into the service of the government's choice. Again I say this denies the voluntary nature and aspect of the structure of the Canadian armed forces.

First let us examine the voluntary aspects of their service. Each serving officer and man joined one and only one of the three services. He did so of his own free will after first having committed himself to a career for life in the Canadian forces and after having chosen which of the three services he wanted to join. He did this voluntarily. These men are in every sense of the word volunteers. Indeed, the officers volunteered to serve for life; that is for the length of time prescribed in the regulations for officers of the rank they would attain during their particular careers.

Each officer in any service on joining voluntarily had a different undertaking to the officers in the other services. This was the result of the free exercise of his choice. A naval officer decided to be different from an army

officer. Under the existing regulations naval officers who reach the rank of lieutenant commander have a career which continues until they reach the age of 45. An army major, whose rank is equivalent to that of the lieutenant commander, has a career which continues until he reaches the age of 49. An air force squadron leader, whose rank is equivalent to that of a major or lieutenant commander, serves to the age of 47 if he is on the flying list. Commanders, lieutenant colonels and wing commanders have careers which last until they reach the ages of 50, 49 and 49 respectively. Captains of the navy, colonels and group captains have careers which continue until they reach respectively the ages of 55, 51 and 51.

At one time the minister indicated that these careers were different. The fact is that each of the officers who joined voluntarily joined for a career which would last a certain length of time. I will repeat a word which I think is the key word in this context, namely "voluntary". They did so voluntarily. As far as I know no one as yet has been informed as to the length of the career which will apply to any particular rank in the new force.

The reason I introduce this problem is that serving officers and men are quite concerned about it. This legislation simply says to the whole of the officers' corps "Don't worry about it, old fellow. We will look after it. You no longer have anything to say about it."

● (3:30 p.m.)

I come back to another point, the use of the word "transitional" in the explanation concerning clause 6. The explanation of the intent of the clause covers up the matter quite successfully. A cursory reading of the clause would, I suppose, leave a person in the same state as members of the committee were left, quite confused. What is important today is whether or not we have the right to permit this confusion, this uncertainty, to continue. What does the government mean and what does the minister mean by the use of the word "transitional"? Matters such as this must be cleared up so that the men who are being arbitrarily transferred will understand what it is they are transferring to, for what period of time and under what conditions.

If we pass this legislation without the consent of the officers and men, the bargain made with respect to the length of their careers, to which I referred earlier, will be broken. Alternatively, differences will be created which will most certainly cause resentment in rank levels where the different lengths of career

[Mr. Forrestall.]