

like I have, Mr. Ray, to recently visit with Gen. Maxwell Taylor, it is obvious he has not lost touch. He still is very, very able and can give very sound advice.

Mr. RAY. Mr. Chairman, one more minute?

Mr. NICHOLS. Yes, sir.

Mr. RAY. How many additional four-star officers would be required for the National Military Council under your plan?

Mr. SKELTON. You actually have very few additional officers because many of those that were appointed would retain a four-star rank or if a three-star were appointed he would of course be promoted to four-star. At best, you would need five slots for these people, because they would be in addition to the old slots allowed by law. They should have that military rank. With the discretion of the President you can have one civilian. Would it not be fine to have someone like Melvin Laird, someone of his caliber, not a four-star general but someone of his intellect, as that civilian member?

Mr. RAY. There is a move to reduce general officers. I wondered if you think Congress is likely to approve any more of those slots.

Mr. SKELTON. Well, I do not see where this is in conflict with the idea of reducing the number of star ranks. What you are doing, you have right now one person doing two jobs, two four-star jobs, which is really a conflict and the real problem. To solve this conflict you are going to have the joint military council I described, put in the legislation over here, and of course they are going to have the proper rank. I do not think that is in conflict with cutting down the service number of stars.

Mr. RAY. Thank you, Mr. Skelton.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. NICHOLS. I want to pursue this a little bit with Mr. Skelton. You are proposing a National Military Council, made up of five members plus one civilian member.

Mr. SKELTON. That is correct.

Mr. NICHOLS. What would be the length of their term?

Mr. SKELTON. They will be staggered. It would be 3 years in duration. However, they would be staggered at the beginning so that they would be turning over every year.

Mr. NICHOLS. You mentioned some extremely prestigious names here. You suggested General Meyer, General Barrow, who shortly is to retire, excellent people. I could add any number, Tom Moorer, and go on from there. Let me remind the gentleman, though, it would seem to me that these people would be apt to carry those same biases that perhaps I have for the Army because I served in the Army, and sometimes I have to examine myself on the other branches of services to see that I treat them fairly.

Would you not expect those same biases to be present that you seem to be critical about in the current system?

Mr. SKELTON. You would expect them to have their service biases. Once a marine, I am told, always a marine. This is fine. And they would understand the way marines work and the thinking of marines, but they would not have the upward pressure from the staff that we need this weapon system, you cannot let the Army steal that program from us, things like that. They would be in a position to be more objective but still retain, and fortunately