

Canadian Forces Act

reserve force? From what the minister said I imagine that the amendment introduced to the Senate and House of Commons Act is to make some such provision. As we have not the bill before us and as we do not know the details of the various amendments which are suggested, I think that further comment would be better delayed until the bill is presented to us.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, I should like to say just a few words about the form in which this legislation is brought before us from year to year. In these remarks I follow along the lines used by the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich.

We appreciate the fact that the position of the Minister of National Defence and of the Associate Minister of National Defence is that, from their point of view, it seems desirable to have all of the legislation that amends existing statutes with reference to defence matters within the confines of one statute or one volume, as time goes on. Without going into a great deal of detail on it, it seems to me that our point that confusion is going to arise is borne out by something that the Associate Minister of National Defence told us this evening. He told us that one of the statutes being amended by the bill to be based on this resolution is the Canadian Forces Act of 1950. However, the Canadian Forces Act of 1950 was one of those omnibus statutes that amended a number of other statutes in respect of defence matters. What is going to happen in 1956 or in 1960 if some of the statutes which were amended by the Canadian Forces Act of 1950 and were subsequently amended by the amendments in the Canadian Forces Act of 1954 which referred to the Canadian Forces Act of 1950 are in turn amended by sections in the Canadian Forces Act of 1956 or 1960?

I am stating the problem rather than solving it; but it seems to me that there is still something to be said, even despite the fact that it might take extra time, for the traditional practice of having individual bills amending the individual statutes which it is the desire of the government to amend. As I say, I recognize that to state the problem is to present the difficulty of doing it in some other way. But it is my fear—and I think that fear is borne out by what the minister has told us tonight—that it is going to get more complicated as time goes on and that, in the long run, this desire to avoid bringing several bills before the house will not be such a good idea.

Mr. Harkness: I should like to add my protest to those that have already been made

with regard to bringing in grab-bag bills of this nature. I think this same sort of thing has happened in the past three years with regard to bills brought in pertaining to national defence. The minister said this particular resolution concerned amendments to five acts. But if you read the resolution through and number the various specific matters dealt with, it will be found that they amount to eight. There are eight different matters altogether that are dealt with in this resolution.

This procedure places the members of the house in the situation of being faced with a resolution which deals with eight different matters. Naturally there are eight different principles involved under ordinary circumstances. As far as I can see from casual examination, most of these things are matters which perhaps everyone in the committee would agree with. When we hear more about them, that may not be so. In any event, it might very well be that amongst those eight amendments is one with which we would disagree violently and therefore feel called upon to vote against the resolution or particularly, after we have the bill and have the information, to vote against the bill because of that one matter. I think it is improper that members of the House of Commons should be placed in a position like that, where you have eight different matters dealt with in one bill, seven of which you might be prepared to accept and one of which you may be determined not to accept. As has just been indicated by the last speaker—I can never remember which Winnipeg he comes from—

Mr. Knowles: There is only one Winnipeg.

Mr. Harkness: I mean I cannot remember which division of Winnipeg he comes from.

Mr. Knowles: Winnipeg North Centre.

Mr. Harkness: In any event, as has just been indicated by him, it is the sort of thing that we should not have to be faced with. For example, one of the things I have heard mentioned in connection with this matter is that the dependents of service personnel who accompany such personnel overseas are going to be subject to the code of service discipline. That raises quite a large question and is not a matter which, in my opinion, should be dealt with along with a number of other things. Until I see the bill I am not in a position to express an opinion on it, but on the basis of the statement the minister has made I am inclined to think that is a pretty dangerous proposition to put into effect. Unless civilians are working directly with and for the army, I doubt very much