

The others will be presented to the house as soon as they have been completely reviewed by the committee, and recommended by council.

It will be remembered that on October 4, this house in appointing the select committee authorized them to consider all legislation passed since the commencement of the war relating to pensions, treatment and reestablishment of former members of His Majesty's forces and of other persons who have otherwise engaged in pursuits closely related to war.

The committee was also instructed to prepare and bring in one or more bills to clarify, amend or supplement the above legislation.

The War Service Grants Act is the first of these acts reviewed by the committee, and the amending bill is the first of the committee's recommendations to the house. The recommendations of the committee have been accepted by the government and the bill is now in the form of a government measure.

The act was passed in 1944, and we have had a year's experience in administering it.

As is very often the case with new legislation affecting the rights and privileges of individuals, we have found by experience that the original measure was capable of improvement.

The act authorized the governor in council to make regulations, and two major orders in council were passed embodying regulations under the two parts of the act, one dealing with war service gratuity, the other dealing with reestablishment credit.

Under the emergency powers conferred upon the government by the War Measures Act several orders in council were passed which had the effect of amending the original act.

As soon as the select committee was set up, the act, the various amending orders in council, and the regulations, were placed before the committee for review, together with a draft bill prepared by the department's legal advisers. This draft bill embodied the various changes which had been made since the act was passed by parliament, but did not introduce any new principles other than those which were already in effect by order in council.

Departmental officers, representatives of veterans' organizations, and others were examined as witnesses.

The committee then gave a most searching and critical analysis to every clause and every sentence of the draft bill.

The amending bill which I am now bringing before the house, upon recommendation

of the committee and with the approval of council, constitutes substantially a measure to incorporate in the act the various changes effected by orders in council as the result of administrative experience.

I should be doing very much less than justice to hon. members of the select committee if, however, I were not to inform the house that many important improvements have been effected as a result of the committee's deliberations.

The constant objective of the committee, fully concurred in by the government, was to tighten up the wording of the various sections so as to protect in every possible way the interests of the veterans. This will appear conspicuously in the amendments to the interpretation clause, clarifying and broadening definitions.

The most important new principle introduced since the act was dealt with on the floor of the house in 1944 is the establishment of a board of review to deal with cases where a gratuity is withheld on account of disciplinary action taken against a member of the forces during the time of his service.

The board is given the right to authorize payment of gratuity where its refusal would constitute an unjustified extension of the punishment already inflicted by the service.

While such a board of review had been set up by the Department of National Defence, the provisions in the bill are much broader and more specific than those adopted by regulation.

The proposals now placed before the house are, in fact, the recommendation of the select committee which has been accepted by the government and in which I am sure the house will heartily concur.

The other features of the bill, while important, are matters of detail which can better be discussed when the bill reaches the committee stage in the house.

I am going to ask my parliamentary assistant, the hon. member for Rosthern (Mr. Tucker), who has been the able chairman of the able parliamentary committee on veterans affairs, to take active charge of the detailed clauses of the measure now before the house.

Mr. A. J. BROOKS (Royal): I should like to say a few words with reference to the bill which is now coming before the house. Since the session opened we have listened to a good many remarks as to what we owe to the men who fought for us overseas, and I am sure we all feel very grateful indeed that the war is now over and that we are returning to the ways of peace.