

Financial Administration Act

has almost gone. He can remember his name; he knows where he was born; he is a new Canadian and knows the year he came to Canada but does not remember the year he took out his naturalization papers. He doesn't remember what has happened during the past several years and does not have any documentation to show where he was born, or that he is a citizen. He can recall the country in which he was born but not the town or date. For three years this man has been given the run-around by the officials who are supposed to authorize a man's eligibility for a pension. He has spent \$50, I think, in having census searches undertaken with the hope that he may be able to find a record of his name. This was done because officials of the Department of National Health and Welfare insisted on it. He even received a letter which I recall and which reads in part something like this: "Obviously, you do not exist." Something is wrong when an employee in a government service makes a statement like that.

The man's problem has been straightened out now and it turned out that the answer was a simple one. I was able to find out that this man had served for a number of years in the armed forces and of course the armed forces kept his records. Nevertheless, the man has lost his pension for three years. He needs it and cannot collect it retroactively. The fact that this happened illustrates that there have been errors. This man has had to go through much merely to prove that he was born.

I have used these illustrations purposely. Perhaps they represent situations that Members of Parliament can successfully find the answer to. Nevertheless, they indicate that very often an individual's rights can be abrogated without there being any redress. It seems to me that it is our responsibility to correct situations like this in Canada which may exist on a larger scale than we suspect. A simple and effective way of dealing with them would be by extending the authority and terms of reference of the Auditor General in order to allow him to act as an ombudsman with respect to administrative matters.

May I mention that Great Britain has taken a step which illustrates the legitimacy of my argument. The man who was appointed Britain's first ombudsman was appointed to investigate grievances against government departments. The man appointed in 1966 to this office was the Comptroller and Auditor-General, Sir Edmund Compton. His title is Parliamentary Commissioner. It does not matter what the title of the office is, but I do believe we ought to expand the terms of reference of

the Auditor General so that he can carry out a most important service to the public which is not now being provided.

• (5:20 p.m.)

This bill extends the terms of reference of the functions of the Auditor General to include that of ombudsman, which is the very thing the British ombudsman actually is. I would remind hon. members that the famous Glassco report of 1963, which we have talked about ever since strongly recommended there should be an ombudsman to hear the grievances of the public and attempt to remedy them. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has told us in reply to questions that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) could serve as ombudsman. I know—and the minister knows as well, because he is a friend of mine—that as Minister of Justice we cannot serve as a parliamentary commissioner or as a defender of civil rights as far as the government is concerned. In fact, I am sure the bureaucratic resistance to the ombudsman idea does not come from the Minister of Justice. I do not think it comes from the Prime Minister, either. Rather it comes from those who make up the multifarious boards, tribunals, councils and agencies which largely create the laws they administer and do not want an ombudsman checking up on them. I believe this is the influence which causes the opposition in this House, on the government side.

It is about time we put the rights of Canadian citizens above those who are supposed to serve the Canadian public as far as the civil service is concerned. Time does not permit me to elaborate on this battle with the bureaucracy which continues. With respect to our Canadian Civil Service I believe it is one of the most effective and efficient in the world, but this is an age of big government, an age when the government and its agencies increasingly take over responsibilities which were formerly regarded as being the normal responsibilities of individual Canadians.

One of the historic men as far as the idea of the ombudsman is concerned is Sir Guy Powles who is the ombudsman for New Zealand. He has served in this office in an outstanding way and he is regarded with respect by government officials in his own country and by all those who know what his office means, as well as by the ombudsman who have been appointed in various countries and states since. Over and over again when he appeared before our committee in 1964 he insisted that the little man needed the services of an ombudsman. His argument ought