

Government Orders

questions. Indeed, I have seen examples in the relatively short time I have been in the House where I found it interesting how three philosophies could essentially agree with the principle of human rights, but at the same time the deviance could be perhaps seen as differences in policies.

This bill is an act to amend three acts: the Geneva Conventions Act, the National Defence Act, and the Trade-marks Act. I am not going to talk too much about the Trade-marks Act. The protocols here are the protocols to the four Geneva Conventions. We are going back now to August 12, 1949. We have a preamble, legal status, and definitions which are very important, field of application, who is involved, and then we get into some of the details that I believe should be noted here.

Article 12 talks about the protection of medical units. Despite the many wars we have had and despite the difficulties we have had in centuries, there has always been a fragment of civilization that causes survival to be there. In my time there has been the rebuilding of Germany after World War II, the rebuilding of Japan after World War II to the point that today those countries not only take their place with the rest of the world powers but are seen as our competitors in the all-important field of economics. I do not object to that. As a member of civilization, God help us if we stop having those kinds of attitudes.

• (1250)

Parallel with that has been the tremendous concern that civilization has always had for medical units. I am a great supporter of the medical fraternity and I am delighted to see that Article 12 talks about the respect and protection that will be accorded to medical units at all times and specifically that they should never be the object of attack. That is very important and I am delighted to see it here.

In reviewing this bill, I went on to see other areas that perhaps deserve comment. I was particularly heartened and encouraged to see the part on civilian population where it talks about the general protection against the effects of hostilities and such things as indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population when it is not required and is a violation of those principles. This is a

code of civilization. This is something against which we would be very ill-advised to have serious objection.

In going over this bill there are certain aspects that if debated in a committee sentence by sentence, I would have some difficulties with. In one section, Part III, Article 7, we are talking about the wounded, the sick and the ship-wrecked. It was not too long ago that we stood in this House and talked about the rigours and the difficulties faced by those who go down to the sea in ships and do their business in great waters. Bill C-25 has a separate section which deals with ship-wrecked personnel and how they should be dealt with. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, as a sailor that particular part of the humane treatment and aspect of this bill is one that I am very much in favour of.

I think one aspect of this bill, and I am just about to wrap up—

An hon. member: Don't do that, you might as well go to one o'clock now.

Mr. Mifflin: Mr. Speaker, I enjoy wrapping up because I usually have to put my act together when I am told that my time is up. I find it is a great position to be in when my colleagues say that I have lots of time to wrap up. Perhaps I should take advantage of that.

Mr. Benjamin: Go to one o'clock.

Mr. Ferguson: It's not often we have such enlightened speakers.

Mr. Mifflin: The hon. member is very kind in his comments.

My party's position on this is that in principle we support the bill. I suppose we would be open to the suggestion as to whether or not we would want to cross every "t" and dot every "i". The important thing to remember is that we are dealing with an aspect of human rights that has taken a long time to put together. This is a piece of legislation that I just would not even begin to have some feeling for the detail of the work involved. I hope to God it will never have to be applied. But if it is, I would like to think that our country, with the compassion we have for human rights and the belief we have in the fundamental principle of individual freedoms, would be seen as indeed, as we have shown in our aspect of peacekeeping in military forces throughout the world, a history that started back in the late 1940s, we would be