

National Defence

years, and it is the product of the work in the first instance of officers representing the three services working under the judge advocate general. In this connection I should like to pay tribute to the judge advocate general, Brigadier R. J. Orde, for his service which was completed with his retirement from the armed forces this very week after thirty-two years in the judge advocate general's branch and thirty-seven years' service in all. During his service he has had an unusual series of responsibilities in connection with legal matters relative to the acts to which I have referred, the Militia Pension Act, the bringing about of a state of war in Canada, the mobilization of the Canadian armed forces, the demobilization of the forces, and many other measures of great importance and complexity. In all these duties he has rendered the most loyal service, and in a very real sense the bill now before us is a lasting monument to his own achievement and work.

It will be found that the bill has 251 sections. It incorporates in its terms legislation which comprised over 600 different sections. Therefore it is not only a consolidation of existing legislation but also a considerable simplification thereof. It is intended in the bill to give effect to the experience of the Canadian armed forces during the two world wars. We have also taken into account the experience of the United Kingdom where a committee was set up under Mr. Justice Lewis which has made a most important report to the government. We have also taken into account the experience of the United States where a committee appointed by my friend, the late Hon. James Forrestal, reported to the secretary of defence and as a result led to legislation which in many ways is parallel to that now before this house.

The importance of the legislation can hardly be overemphasized. Not only will it provide for the administration of the Department of National Defence, the discipline of the armed forces, the work of the defence research board and many other matters but in view of the increased and increasing importance of defence, as I believe hon. members will recognize, there is a real urgency that we should have streamlined legislation to regulate these important matters. Of course at the present time the legislation affects the 48,000 odd officers and men in the active forces, the 49,000 in the reserves, and to a considerable degree the 24,000 civilians working in the Department of National Defence, a total population of something like 120,000. In the event of war its importance can be appreciated when hon. members recall that we had in the armed forces of Canada in the last war no less than 1,200,000 men and women who,

during their periods of service, were all governed by the provisions of legislation which the bill will now replace.

As I said to hon. members, the legislation received the most serious and painstaking consideration by a committee in the other place. In consequence a considerable number of amendments, largely of a technical character or affecting the wording, were made. The bill now before the house includes all these amendments without any alterations, but in addition it contains certain sections which were not considered in the other place because we were advised they dealt with money matters. They are sections 10; 11; 12(4); 36; 53(3), (4) and (5); 54(a) and (d); 55; 190(9); 208 and 227. We were advised that those clauses dealt with money matters, with which the other place did not deal, so they are coming before this house for the first time. The bill also has a number of minor technical changes made on the advice of the law officers of the Department of National Defence and of the Department of Justice since the measure passed the other place.

The result of all this work is now before the house. As I believe I indicated previously, this is the eleventh complete draft. I have been through the drafts five times myself, and it has received the consideration of senior officers of the armed forces, of the chiefs of staff committee, of a special committee of the cabinet, the cabinet defence committee, and of the cabinet itself on a number of occasions. It has also been subjected to critical examination by officers who had previous experience in the armed forces of Canada. Despite all the work that has gone into it, however, we do not suggest for a moment that the bill is perfect. It is an exceedingly difficult, complex and comprehensive piece of legislation. We have made it as simple and plain as we can, but certainly it can be improved. We hope the house will adopt the suggestion I have made and refer it to a committee consisting largely of men having service experience in one or other or both wars, who will then receive the views of the legal advisers and any relevant service personnel; and I have no doubt they will be able to make a number of improvements. We want the best possible act, and we invite the co-operation of every hon. member of this house, as well as those in the other place, in the interests of greater justice for the services, greater efficiency for the department, and more security for Canada.

Mr. G. R. Pearkes (Nanaimo): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated when this legislation was in the resolution stage on April 18, members on this side will be pleased to co-operate with the government in facilitating its passage.