

Veterans Benefit Act

My second point is that I want to join in the protest which was made by my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill), in his statement with respect to this omnibus bill. I sent out for the Veterans Benefit Act of 1951. I was going to say that it was the present minister who was in charge of that bill, but of course it was a different minister. At that time we had the Veterans Benefit Act and we also passed three separate acts, which are now included in the omnibus bill that we have before us tonight.

I presume the minister will not have too much sympathy for those practising law in other places, but some day he may have to practise law again himself. In fact, we hope that that day will come before too long. When he does, he will have, of course, an advantage over other lawyers, because he will have sat here and he will know he has to turn up the omnibus act to find the amendments to twelve different acts. How are other lawyers across Canada who are consulted by clients, by pensioners, by war veterans and so on, to get the information? They will have to get the Pension Act and get all these other acts. They will have to look up the index and find the amendments. Then they will advise their clients, and later on they will find that because the minister did not want to spend too much time in the house and did not want to bring in eleven or twelve different acts, he tied them all up in one bundle. This is the first time it has happened with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Department of National Defence have done this before and they have set a bad example. The Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton), who is sitting in front of the Minister of Veterans Affairs, must have had

a bad influence upon the minister because in 1951 the Department of Veterans Affairs at least introduced separate bills. Today we find that they are bringing in one bill and including all these others. I think it is a bad principle. It is wrong; it is unfair to the veterans themselves. If this is going to be done, well, then, why does not the Minister of Transport (Mr. Chevrier) bring in an omnibus bill to deal with air transport, the Canadian National Railways, the harbours board and a dozen other things? Why does he not bundle up all the things that he has to deal with and bring them in in one bill? Tonight we are endorsing a principle which I think is wrong, and I want to express my disapproval of it.

Mr. J. M. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I want to make one statement. I have been in this house and have heard this practice criticized again and again. To the best of my recollection I have never seen anyone bold enough to stand up and say one word in favour of it.

Motion agreed to and bill read the second time.

Mr. Lapointe: I move that the bill be referred to a special committee on veterans affairs to be appointed at a later date.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Claxton: The time is approaching when we might adjourn. Tomorrow, as announced, we will take up the Criminal Code. If we conclude that I would hope that hon. members would agree to adjourn.

At ten o'clock the house adjourned, without question put, pursuant to standing order.
