

Munitions and Supply Act

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): While I am opposed to the amendment moved by the hon. member for Swift Current, it seems to me that if there is any doubt about the meaning of the section, the minister might wish to have it referred to his officials for redrafting.

Mr. GARDINER: The section is as the hon. member discussed it before the dinner recess; that is the intention of it, and I think that is what it says.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): I think it does, too.

Mr. FAIR: I understood the minister before the dinner recess to say that in any case where the landlord did not put in an application before the 30th of June, the total amount would be turned over to the tenant.

Mr. GARDINER: That is the case now. If the landlord does not put in a claim before the 30th of June, the total amount is paid to the applicant.

Section agreed to.

Section 7 agreed to.

Bill reported, read the third time and passed.

MUNITIONS AND SUPPLY ACT

AMENDMENTS TO BRING ACT OF 1939 INTO CONFORMITY WITH PRESENT PRACTICES

Hon. C. D. HOWE (Minister of Munitions and Supply) moved the second reading of Bill No. 7, to amend the Department of Munitions and Supply Act.

Mr. GORDON GRAYDON (Leader of the Opposition): I assume that the minister intends to give some detailed explanation in connection with this bill.

Mr. HOWE: The urgency of passing this bill arises out of the explanatory notes, which state:

The Department of Munitions and Supply Act was passed at the fifth session of the eighteenth parliament held between September 7 and September 13, 1939, chapter three of the statutes of that session. The act was brought into force by proclamation on April 9, 1940.

The act limited the life of the department to three years, and to-day we have arrived at April 9, 1943. At midnight to-night the great department expires.

I wish to thank the official opposition for dealing with this bill to-night. I appreciate that the hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) had made a special study of the

[Mr. T. C. Douglas.]

bill and that he is absent from the house to-night, but hon. gentlemen opposite, in view of the emergency, are willing to proceed in his absence. For this I am grateful.

This bill is more or less a consolidation of amendments which have been made to the Munitions and Supply Act by order in council as the experience of the department has indicated the necessity. The act limiting the life of the department to three years is repealed. I think it is obvious that a definite limit to the life of the department should not be established at this time. The department is now the owner of real property in the right of his majesty to the extent of over \$800,000,000, and it will, of course, take a considerable period after the war to liquidate these properties. I visualize that the department will continue until it is merged with one of the existing departments of government. I think that will probably be the aftermath through the years. But I am sure that, in the light of three years' experience, we shall all agree that it is not wise to fix a definite date for termination.

I believe we can deal more appropriately with each section in committee, but I will run through them briefly.

The first section brings the act into conformity with practice. Since the early days of the department appointments have in fact been made by the Civil Service Commission of Canada rather than by the governor general in council as prescribed in the act, and it is thought wise to correct the act in that regard.

Then, the ministerial powers were designated in the original act as "His Majesty's government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland whether through the medium of the British Supply Board or otherwise", and also mentions the "government of the Republic of France." Of course the British Supply Board has disappeared, and the department is buying to-day the purchases in Canada by all or practically all the united nations. This is amended accordingly.

Then there is the matter of signatures. The deputy minister or the acting deputy minister is required to sign all requisitions of \$5,000 and over. In a department such as ours a number of signing officers are required for smaller purchases, and the act is amended to permit the delegation of signing authority up to \$50,000. The amendment corresponds with the act in that the minister must sign any requisition for \$50,000 or over.

Then, the original act provided that the minister had jurisdiction to purchase up to \$5,000 without the consent of the governor general in council first having been obtained. That limit has been raised to \$15,000. It was found that the volume of orders in council