

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: May I say that the Report of the Committee was a compromise. Some members of the Committee were not in favour of some of the dispositions contained in the Report. There was one part of that Report with which I did not agree, but the members of the Committee compromised their views in order to get at some definite conclusion and to make a unanimous report. If that is not the case, I feel that I have lost all interest in the Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: I may say as a member of that Committee that it laboured, I think, during the whole week, sitting up until 12 and 1 o'clock almost every night, in addition to which the members attended to their duties in this Chamber. I had not the opportunity of attending all the meetings of the Committee and was not present when this particular principle was discussed. I was under the impression that while some of the members dissented from some other principles embodied in some of the clauses, that, as my honourable friend from Ottawa (Hon. Mr. Belcourt) has stated, it was a compromise; otherwise we could not have arrived at any conclusion.

This Bill involves a subject which has absorbed the exclusive attention of a Royal Commission for I think at least six months, and in perusing the report of that Commission we found nothing that was satisfactory to our minds to give to us a clear opinion upon the subject now in controversy. We therefore regarded this question as one of the most complex questions which we could deal with; and, knowing that the ex-soldiers have represented to Parliament from Session to Session their additional needs, a recommendation was made that at the ensuing Session this matter should be fully considered, when it could be taken up at the early part of the Session and threshed out and the practice followed in other countries adopted if necessary.

The leader of the Government sat on that Committee, and I am bound to say that if I had thought that my honourable friend would not have supported the Committee in this report, I would not have sat upon the Committee five minutes. I understood, when my honourable friend sat there, that he represented the Government and supported the findings of the Committee in this matter and did not dissent from them.

If I thought the honourable member from Edmonton (Hon. Mr. Griesbach) was going to move against this report—he did reserve to himself the right to speak upon it, as

he has done—yet if my honourable friend was going to pursue this course, he should have brought in a minority report and should have intimated to the Committee that he was going to do so. Although I heard my honourable friend say that he would express his dissent, I never understood that the matter would resolve itself into a test motion as to whether this clause should be adopted or defeated.

This is a complex Bill. During the time it was under consideration we had the Law Clerk of this House and the legal advisers of the Departments—

Hon. Mr. BEIQUÉ: The Law Clerk for two or three days.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: —and I recall no measure that has been before this honourable House for years that received the expert attention that this question did.

The sections of this Bill are largely interdependent; you strike out one prop, and down comes the edifice; and to say that the work we bestowed on this matter last week, from early morning to midnight, must go for naught, and that sentiment must assert itself to the extent of striking out this section, thus destroying the expert work done upon it, is, to say the least, disappointing to me.

I voice only my own feelings upon the subject. I think that when a Committee of this House gives serious attention to such a problem as this, its members are entitled to consideration and the support of their fellow members. It is an easy matter for honourable gentlemen who have not given very close attention to this subject to rise instantaneously to their feet and say they differ from the Committee. The tendency of human nature is probably not to consider that the midnight oil has been burned to try to work out these very problems. If this were a conclusive matter that could not be remedied at some future time, it seems to me that a very much stronger case would lie against the Committee; but without having taken any stand on the principle involved—and I must say that I sympathize with the view held by the honourable gentleman from Edmonton—when I learned that in my absence the majority of the Committee had viewed the matter in another way, I freely accorded my support to the Report which had been prepared.

I certainly think it is due to the members of the Committee who laboured early and late to prepare a report and a Bill which, in my judgment, is a most carefully prepared piece of legislation upon this subject, and a credit to them, that it should be adopted and should not go for naught.