

*Veterans Benefit Act*

cover all matters affecting veterans across Canada. Year after year we have brought forward some of the matters which seriously concern veterans, and unless the minister makes some provision for the committee to consider these matters, the committee will fail in the attempt that should be made in this house on behalf of the veterans. There are still many problems which require settlement, and of course the problem of those on war veterans allowance comes to mind.

This bill before us seems to me to be a confusing document. Bill No. 101, an act respecting benefits for members of the Canadian forces, undertakes to deal with ten separate acts. It deals with the War Service Grants Act; Veterans Rehabilitation Act; the Pension Act; Veterans Land Act; Veterans Insurance Act; Reinstatement in Civil Employment Act; Civil Service Act; Veterans Business and Professional Loans Act; Public Service Superannuation Act; Unemployment Insurance Act. The laws of our country are sufficiently complicated, even for those who are engaged in a day to day attempt to interpret them. As we have had pointed out by laymen looking at the Criminal Code, the laws are a bit confusing to laymen. I feel that this bill is going to add to the confusion. I am not at all clear as to how a person is going to deal quickly with some of the problems that arise if this bill becomes law.

As it stands, this bill appears to differ from the one we were considering a few moments ago, which introduced amendments to the various sections of five different acts. The bill was introduced by the Department of National Defence. Under those circumstances the sections would be amended and an office consolidation, or in time the revised statutes, would show clearly the changes that had been made. Here we have the Veterans Benefit Act, 1954, as this may be cited. It deals in ever so many paragraphs with ten separate acts. A search for information concerning, for example, the Pension Act will eventually lead you to this particular act, section 5. What reference will there be in the Pension Act to indicate to anyone that he must look further into this Veterans Benefit Act, 1954? I would think there would be some other way of dealing with this matter.

Again, as we go through this later on, is the minister going to give us information, act by act? He has not been as obliging as the Associate Minister of National Defence, who separated his recent omnibus bill into parts I to V. There are no separations into parts in this bill, and consequently consideration of it becomes extremely difficult.

[Mr. Churchill.]

Then, where do we stand in the matter of dealing with a general principle, when there are references to so many acts throughout the bill? This is another feature that makes it extremely difficult. The purpose of debate on second reading is to discuss the principle of the bill. In this instance are we to discuss ten different principles, or is there only one? It was not clear to me from the minister's statement just what the situation is in that regard.

If one can discern a principle in this peculiar bill it is that regulations are now made law. We have a suggestion that in some of these sections statutory re-enactment of regulations is taking place. This would seem to be a bit confusing in terminology. I have asked my colleagues how you can re-enact something that had never been enacted. A regulation may be published, but it is not enacted. But now it seems we are re-enacting regulations.

The bill, as I see it, generally amounts to that. In large measure it is a sort of interpretation bill, or a bill which explains the meanings of the various sections in ten different acts, and extends those meanings by way of regulations which, in times past, have been published in order that those acts might be operative.

Would it not have been better to have retained the regulations as regulations, or to have amended the pertinent sections of the ten acts dealt with? If this goes on, if we are to have bills of this nature presented to us, then I think it is going to become extraordinarily difficult for people who require to know the law to find their way about in these documents. It seems rather odd that, just after a revision of the statutes—which certainly has been very helpful—we are now piling in bills of this nature which will only add to the confusion.

I hope this will be the last time the Department of Veterans Affairs will bring forward a bill of this nature for serious consideration—because I am not treating this lightly. Serious consideration should be given to dealing with acts in the normal way in which we have dealt with other acts. Why does this particular department, and its neighbour the Department of National Defence, have to produce these omnibus bills? Are the other departments going to follow suit? Each department administers more than one act. Is this a system that is going to be adopted? If so, then it seems to me it will cause no end of difficulty. It is creating sufficient difficulty right now, and my hope is that with protests of this nature, and perhaps subsequent protests from the committee that