

Government Orders

Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merriitt): Mr. Speaker, in viewing Bill C-93, I am struck by problems that both the public and many government and opposition members run into when this broad-brush approach is taken by bringing in legislation under an omnibus bill.

I do not knock the government for wanting to do this in some cases. When making small housekeeping amendments it makes sense to put them into an omnibus bill.

However, in this particular case we have 10 different and diverse sections. The bill is fairly substantial. It is 84 pages long with amendments in a number of different areas to a number of different bills. It is a little hard sometimes for members of the public to keep up with exactly what sections and acts are being changed.

It would be handy for any person in British Columbia who is watching at 11.20 in the morning to go through some of the acts that this bill will change.

The bill itself is called an act to implement certain government organization provisions of the budget tabled in the House of Commons on February 25, 1992.

The bill includes ten different parts, the first of which is the agricultural products board. It then changes certain provisions in the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. Part III makes substantial changes in direction in the Canada Council for the Arts and for Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities Act with amendments to the Canada Council Act. Part IV amends the Canadian Commercial Corporation Act. Part V changes Emergency Preparedness Canada. Part VI is the independent review commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

One will see that this trend is fairly widespread as far as what it is touching.

Part VII deals with the Intellectual Property Tribunal, making amendments to the Copyright Act, Trade Marks Act, Intellectual Property Tribunal Act and various other amendments to other acts from the Financial Administration Act to the Privacy Act.

Part VIII concerns the International Trade and Procurement Tribunal and makes amendments to that particular act and consequential amendments to the

Access to Information Act, Financial Administration Act, Privacy Act and others.

Part IX concerns the Petroleum Monitoring Agency and makes amendments to the Energy Monitoring Act.

Finally, Part X is the Veterans Land Administration amendment.

One can see in any omnibus bill we run into the situation where it is a broad-brush approach. We have too much in one bill. I suggest there are certain parts of this bill that should have been broken out and brought to the House in separate bills. For example, if there are minor changes in the Veterans Land Administration Act I can see coupling that with small changes.

In this case we are not looking at small changes. A number of them are fairly substantial. I would like to turn to some of the substantial changes. I refer specifically to those concerning the Canada Council.

Yesterday I attended the reception put on by the Speaker in the Hall of Honour. It was celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Canada Council and the 20th anniversary of the art bank. I think part of what I picked up in talking to the people there and part of what I picked up in listening to the remarks made by the president was that there was a substantial fear of major cutbacks in the arts community.

In Wednesday's economic statement the Minister of Finance indicated 10 per cent cuts across the board and substantial cuts to arts and culture.

It was clear in speaking to the people involved with the Canada Council and the art bank that they are very concerned at the degradation of the arts and cultural community in Canada. We have heard it here today and we have heard it many times before that societies survive and thrive when attention is paid to where they came from and to where they are heading. Societies thrive when they look at and preserve the art and the culture that is so important in explaining societies at any one given time.

That is what is being attacked not only in the Minister of Finance's statement on Wednesday, but also in the February 1992 budget provisions that are now being put into place with Bill C-93.

It might be reasonable at this time to point out some of the problems the arts community has with this particular section. I would like to quote liberally from a release