

continue to fight for the plight of veterans, unlike other Ministers of the Crown who have no sensitivity and no compassion for those who were prepared to fight for their country.

**Mr. Lewis:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There have been discussions among the Parties. I think that if the Chair were to ask for unanimous consent, there would be a disposition to send the Bill to the Committee of the Whole House rather than a legislative committee.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

Motion agreed to, Bill read the second time and, by unanimous consent, the House went into committee thereon, Mr. Danis in the chair.

**The Chairman:** Order. House in Committee of the Whole on Bill C-100, an Act to amend the Army Benevolent Fund Act, the Children of War Dead (Education Assistance) Act, the Compensation for Former Prisoners of War Act, the Pension Act, the Veterans' Land Act and the War Veterans Allowance Act. Shall Clause 1 carry?

On Clause 1—

**Mr. Nunziata:** Mr. Chairman, I was just told that at this stage a Member need not sit in his or her regular seat. Thus I have taken the opportunity to see what it is like to speak from the front benches. I want Hon. Members to know that it is a different feeling to speak from here. One is so close to the action, the Cabinet and the Minister.

**Mr. Hees:** I can tell you, the speeches do not sound any better from here.

**Mr. Nunziata:** The Minister says that the speeches do not sound any better. The heckling from behind is disconcerting when one is speaking from the front benches. I will take this opportunity to sit in one of these front seats and ask a few questions with respect to Bill C-100.

First, with respect to Clause 1, it states:

Subsections 5(1) and (2) of the Army Benevolent Fund Act are repealed and the following substituted therefor:

"5. (1) The Board shall establish a central committee for Canada and it may constitute such other committees as it considers appropriate.

I would like to ask the Minister to explain the necessity of that particular amendment to the Army Benevolent Fund Act.

**Mr. Hees:** Mr. Chairman, the answer to the question is that there used to be provincial committees. They no longer exist. Therefore, this new set-up is to take its place.

**Mr. Nunziata:** What is the purpose of the Army Benevolent Fund Act? What exactly does this piece of legislation do?

**Mr. Hees:** The whole purpose of the Act is to provide benefits to veterans who are in various types of need. That is what it deals with.

#### *Army Benevolent Fund Act and Related Acts*

**Mr. Nunziata:** Is there a means test to be applied under the terms of the Act? I am wondering how the Act works. Is a veteran required to come before a particular committee, as outlined in the Army Benevolent Fund Act, and must that particular veteran show need? What are the criteria? I would like to know how active this particular board is. How many cases does it consider on an annual or monthly basis?

**Mr. Hees:** The people who sit on the Board are chosen from the civilian population. They judge the matters which come before the board from the point of view of need, that is, whether certain things are needed or not. That is what the board does.

**Mr. Nunziata:** It states that the board shall establish a central committee for Canada and that this central committee may constitute such other committees as it considers appropriate. Further, it states:

(2) Each committee shall consist of up to five members, one of whom shall be appointed by the Board and shall be the Chairman of the committee and the other members shall be appointed, after consultation with veterans organizations, by the Chairman of the committee with the approval of the Board.

● (1720)

How many veterans sit on the central committee? Is there any provision in the Act that would require that one or more members of either the central committee or the other committees should be veterans? It seems to me that in order to understand fully and to comprehend them and to have the sensitivity that the Minister has for veterans, it would be appropriate that there be a requirement in law that at least one or more members of this particular committee be veterans. Then the board would have that expertise in and understanding of the needs of veterans.

**Mr. Hees:** Mr. Chairman, all of the members of each of these committees are veterans. I quite agree with the Hon. Member that unless one is a veteran, it is difficult to understand the needs and feelings of veterans. Another very important aspect of this is that when adjudications are made by boards which are made up of veterans, the veterans have much more respect for and belief in rulings that are made by people who understand their problems in the same way they do.

**Mr. Nunziata:** Mr. Chairman, I asked questions relating to the nature of the budget the committee would have. How much money is expended on an annual basis under the Army Benevolent Fund Act?

**Mr. Hees:** Mr. Chairman, the answer to that question is that \$350,000 covers the whole cost.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gauthier:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister how he will proceed to appoint the members of that committee.

The Bill indicates that he will consult with veterans organizations. Will this be on-going consultation? Will there be a