

Revised Statutes

as well as all Members of the committee who worked so diligently and effectively with respect to this matter.

This is the first time that Parliament has been consulted about the *Revised Statutes of Canada*. It is as a result of the law revision legislation of 1974, which I understand provided for parliamentarians to become involved, that this process was undertaken.

I think it poses a bit of a dilemma inasmuch as the officials who are responsible for assembling the material are obliged under the existing law to bring it forward at a point when they have in fact revised and perfected the statutes of Canada. In this particular instance there was some creativity involved because, as the Hon. Member pointed out, for the first time the French version was developed not as a translation but as an original text in French which, as I said in my remarks at second reading, reflects the evolution of the equality of the two languages in our country. I suggest that all Members would want to applaud this development.

While we will examine the provisions of the Act, I suspect we will be faced with the practical matter that we must have something to present to the committees. Whether or not we can involve Members of Parliament at an earlier stage is something that we could examine. Once we finish this revision, I suppose it is the beginning of the consideration of the next revision which will take place later.

I wanted to address the point about loose-leaf and bound volume versions of the *Revised Statutes of Canada*, which was referred to earlier. The only official version of the *Revised Statutes of Canada* is the bound version. As yet, we have not sanctified the loose-leaf version because these are rather more of a convenience to the people of Canada, including lawyers, legislators and the general public.

The bound volumes are still the official version. The original bound volume was signed by myself, Her Excellency the Governor General, clerks of the Parliament. They are deposited with the clerk of the Parliament in the other place as the official text.

Therefore, at this point in the development of our approach to the statutes, the bound volumes are the official versions. The loose-leaves are a convenience and something that I as a practising lawyer have long awaited. In order to research any particular statute one had to become rather agile in running up and down shelves of statutes and juggling two or three volumes on one's lap, ultimately having to inscribe little notes in statutes as to what was the final version of a law at a particular time. In any event, I am sure that people probably now know more than they care to about the *Revised Statutes of Canada*.

It is an important date. I share the view of the Hon. Member for Lethbridge—Foothills that this is a historic day because it has not happened very often since Confederation. With improving technology, I share the view of the Hon. Member for York Centre that we may be entering into an era

when we will be able to perfect this revision to the point that we will not be required to go through the process of having to come back periodically to pass *Revised Statutes*. It will become an ongoing, continuous procedure. I think that would certainly be a happy day as far as the officials of my department are concerned, if not the Minister.

Mr. Kaplan: Madam Chairperson, I have a brief question that one of my colleagues wanted to ask. How many copies of the *Revised Statutes* does the Government intend to print? The Member for Ottawa—Vanier, who wanted to ask the question, would probably be content to receive an answer as soon as the Minister has one.

Perhaps I might raise another point. I did not raise it in committee, but one of the things that might be considered in this revision, and which would be very welcome to the profession, would be to have the section number clearly indicated on each page. In a long statute with long sections, it often happens that a section will run over a number of pages. The Minister himself made me think of it when he reminded me of sitting down with about two volumes on one's lap trying to track a statute from the RSCs through a number of other volumes where it may or may not have been revised. It causes the problem of not being able to easily find what section of the statute one is looking at on the page and having to turn back, very often a long way, to find the actual section. Perhaps the Minister has already thought of this or perhaps it is already in the plans of the revision drafters to identify the section on each page. I would be interested in the Minister's reaction.

• (1210)

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I think, Madam Chairman, that the suggestion is an excellent one. Unfortunately, it is too late to be of any effectiveness because the statutes have been printed. However, the Hon. Member's point is well taken and there will be a note made of this in the annals of the Department of Justice so that when the next revision comes down it will become known in the history of our country as the Robert Kaplan suggestion with respect to the numbering of statutes and the clear identification on each page of long and involved sections or amendments.

My recollection of a statute which has a long and involved section is the Income Tax Act. While these provisions are required to be long and so on for technical reasons, by and large they are as incomprehensible to most Canadians who are literate. The Hon. Member's suggestion is a very good suggestion, indeed. We have not revised the Income Tax Act, so this may be a good chance to use the Hon. Member's suggestion, for which I will give the Hon. Member full credit.

Clauses 3 to 18 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Preamble agreed to.

Title agreed to.