

The Address—Mr. Knowles

to forgo the war veterans allowance so his wife may apply for as much of the means test old age pension as she can get. It must be remembered that one-half of the \$17.25 she would get would be paid by the provincial government. In other words we are asking veterans like this to look to the province rather than to the federal government which has responsibility for them.

I have just picked out a few of these cases which are being sent in to me all the time, but they certainly demonstrate that this is a problem which should not be left over until next session. If it has to be dealt with in committee I submit that it is more important that it should be dealt with at this session than some of the committee work now being carried out. Some of the matters being dealt with at this session, even some of those which I favour, could wait. I am thinking of the changes being made to the Annuities Act, which I support. The need to have those changes dovetail with the old age security legislation is not as great as the need to deal at this session with the whole problem of war veterans allowances.

I have submitted thus far individual cases of veterans, both single and married. May I put in a word as well for the widows who qualify under the War Veterans Allowance Act. I just do not see how we can regard ourselves as doing our job at this session if we leave them in the position where the most they can get is \$40.41 per month. I welcome the change being made in the Pension Act whereby the widow of a veteran who had 50 per cent disability or more will get \$100 per month instead of \$75. However, it seems to me that the spread between \$100 and \$40.41 per month is too great. On the one hand we have a veteran with a disability of 50 per cent or more who dies and whose widow goes on a pension of \$100 per month as of right—I think she is entitled to it—and then we have the other veteran, a comrade, with a disability of only 45 per cent who dies and whose widow gets nothing as of right. If she can meet the means test and other conditions under the War Veterans Allowance Act the most she can get is \$40.41 per month.

I realize the principle that is involved, but surely something should be done at this session to narrow that spread between \$100 in the one case and \$40.41 in the other. I welcome the announcement that widows who qualify for a full pension under the Pension Act will have it increased from \$75 to \$100 per month, but I urge the government to do something at this session to raise that other figure. I have here a case of a widow in Winnipeg who was married in 1906 and whose husband served in both wars. Most of his

active service was in world war I, but he served in both wars. She was married to him through both of those periods, but because he had a disability of considerably less than 50 per cent the best she can get is the burnt-out pension under the War Veterans Allowance Act, which is only \$40.41 a month.

I am simply pointing out that there is too big a spread between the \$100 paid under the Pension Act—I approve of it—and the \$40.41 which is the most a widow in these circumstances is able to get. Furthermore, a widow can receive that only if she is 55 years of age or over and is able to satisfy the terms of the means test set out in the War Veterans Allowance Act.

I feel that this whole question is just as important as was the old age pension question, just as important as is the question of amending the disability pension provisions. I think it is a lot more important than the question of overhauling the Annuities Act. I think it is more important than some other matters that are being considered by various committees sitting at the present time. I urge most strongly that this matter be dealt with by the government at this session of parliament. I am satisfied that others, as this debate goes on, will continue to make the same plea I am making today, and we are still hoping that it is not falling on deaf ears. I know that so far the government seem satisfied with what they have done. They think it is enough to deal with the Pension Act at this session, but so far as the veterans affected and the local branches of the Canadian Legion are concerned, they want action on this matter at this session of parliament.

I was quite interested in the interjections the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) made the other day when the hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) was speaking on the question of making changes at this session in the War Veterans Allowance Act. At page 1243 of *Hansard* for November 21 the minister made an interjection when the hon. member was asking that the Liberal members be given freedom to vote on the subamendment as they might wish. The interjection was as follows:

Mr. Martin: There is nothing but freedom in the ranks of the government members.

A little later, at page 1244, when the hon. member for Lake Centre was pursuing this matter, the Minister of National Health and Welfare made a few more interjections and one of them was a question already mentioned today by the hon. member for Macleod (Mr. Hansell). It reads as follows:

Mr. Martin: Does my hon. friend suggest that when any member of this house comes to register his vote, he does not use that privilege in accordance with his best judgment in the circumstances?