

Government Orders

My second question is, in light of the declining number of Canadian veterans, could there not be a clause to include these people that would have at least gone to the end of the Korean war? In a letter to me from the minister it says: "The courage of the Merchant Marine is well documented. The service they rendered to the war effort is undeniable and all Canadians are grateful for their work. However, many veterans who served with the Armed Forces during wartime are still not eligible for the VIP program. I refer to the people who went to Korea as such".

I would like to know if the minister is aware of the numbers of the merchant marine who might today still be around to be able to take advantage of the VIP program but, more important, how many Koreans veterans were denied the benefits of the War Veterans Allowance Program?

Mr. Merrithew: Mr. Chairman, questions on legislation such as this quite often refer to items which are not in the bill.

I might add that the questions do not even pertain to clause 1, but I will undertake to get those figures. There are some very good reasons why that date was chosen or else it would not have been chosen. I will undertake to get that. Naturally I would not have those kinds of figures at my fingertips at this time.

Mrs. Campbell (South West Nova): I think clause 1 allows us to question all parts of the bill. All I am asking the minister is why these people were excluded in these amendments in the bill before the House. I was just wondering if he had some explanation, besides just no explanation, as to why we had a cut-off date. It is very important at this time in Canada's history as we send troops over to the Persian Gulf who go not knowing what their rights or benefits are. I know it can be passed by Parliament retroactively as it was done in the Korean war and the date was selected. I know that there are veterans who were hurt by that cut-off date.

It just seems to me as we have this omnibus bill helping veterans—and I have nothing to say against the bill—why we could not include the few veterans who are not included for those benefits?

Mr. Merrithew: Mr. Chairman, I fully realize that one can discuss many items under Clause 1. The important thing is the date that was chosen. I suspect, it was the date of the signing of the truce. There were quite a few veterans of course who served in the Third Battalion that

went over after that signing of the truce. I would know many of them personally.

Again, I cannot get the numbers the hon. members has asked for and I would suggest that we could discuss that at a future time. If she wishes, I will put it in writing. I will be glad to find those numbers, but I do not have those at my fingertips at this time.

The Deputy Chairman: Perhaps the Chair can help the House. The clauses can be divided into blocks as follows. Clauses 1 to 3 can be approved in one block, and so on. We will approve clauses 1 to 3 as one block right now.

Mrs. Campbell (South West Nova): I rise on a point of order, Mr. Chairman. I believe that once we leave clause 1, one cannot talk in generalities on the bill. Is that not correct? One has to then speak on the clause.

The Deputy Chairman: This is true, but the Chair was just trying to be helpful. We will continue with clause 1, the hon. member for Beaches—Woodbine.

Mr. Young (Beaches—Woodbine): Mr. Chairman, while on clause 1, I want to make reference to the war veterans allowance.

As the minister knows, funds are fairly tight at the present time in the federal government and any further drain on benefits available under legislation affecting veterans is of concern to all of us.

Is the minister aware that, three days before Remembrance Day, there are some 40 commissionaires, who are all veterans and who work at the Toronto Pearson International Airport, who have been given termination of employment notices? I understand that these notices have been given to more commissionaires across the country. Is the minister aware of what the drain will be on the war veterans allowance for these elderly veterans who will no longer be employed by the federal government because of cutbacks?

Mr. Merrithew: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member did give me notice of this. Unfortunately, it was well into the middle of Question Period and I was preoccupied by many other problems during that time, as he might well imagine. I did try to find out more about it by sending out for information.

I am told that the Corps of Commissionaires have a contract with the RCMP and the RCMP has indicated that, due to budget problems, it is not going to renew the contracts for a certain part of that. While it is regrettable, I will undertake to pursue the matter with the Solicitor General to see if we can get more details about it.