

Supply—Veterans Affairs

Mr. Lennard: But they were monthly payments?

Mr. Gregg: Not necessarily. Many of them were but some of them were not.

Mr. Lennard: Does the cost of administration come out of this item?

Mr. Gregg: No, the cost of administration is taken care of by the welfare vote.

Mr. Green: This particular form of help was first introduced in the fiscal year 1949-50, and for that year it was set at \$500,000. For the present fiscal year there is an increase to \$750,000. Last year the provision was really an experiment. The minister told us that he wanted to see how it would work out before deciding on a permanent policy. Is the minister now in a position to tell us what the permanent policy is to be? If assistance of this type is to be continued then I suggest there should be some statute behind it so that these veterans will not be dependent on the bringing in of an annual vote. That is always a very uncertain way to provide for payments. It would seem that we should very soon be reaching the stage of having some statute to define just what the rights are. Perhaps the minister can tell us whether his department has reached any final conclusion as to this matter. I think it should also be pointed out to the minister again that the very fact he is finding it necessary to increase the amount for these grants shows that the amount of war veterans allowance payable is insufficient. These amounts are paid to help recipients of war veterans allowance, and if the amount of war veterans allowance were increased there would not be such need for the grant. I am sure that veterans would prefer to have an increase in their war veterans allowance instead of having to pass a second means test in order to receive payments from the assistance fund.

Then, there is another feature. As I understand the present regulations, a man cannot qualify for any help whatever unless he is drawing full war veterans allowance. It would appear to me that if he is getting a small pension of, let us say, \$25 a month, and then gets a certain amount by way of war veterans allowance, he cannot qualify for help under this fund.

I have here a notice sent out by the Vancouver office which refers to "any veteran or veteran's widow in receipt of full war veterans allowance, who is in need." That is, they have to come within that classification in order to qualify for help.

I am wondering why there is that strict provision. Why is the regulation not made wide enough so that help can be given to any veterans in receipt of some war veterans

allowance? I believe there are many cases where a veteran may be drawing only partial war veterans allowance, and yet he may be badly in need of help of this kind. He cannot qualify for it because of the present regulation.

Then, there is one other point; apparently in making an investigation, before allowing any help from this fund, investigators go into all sorts of details. For instance, question 13 on the form refers to entitlement to assistance from other sources, such as social assistance, mothers' allowance, old age pensions, family allowance, medical and hospital care, and other things.

Surely that is going pretty far. Does it mean that an attempt is made to shove the veteran off onto the city authorities for social assistance or, if it is a widow, onto the provincial authorities for mothers' allowance? I do not think the attitude should be that these veterans or widows must try every other source for help before becoming eligible for assistance from this fund. Would the minister explain the situation with regard to these different points?

Mr. Gregg: Mr. Chairman, dealing with the maximum of war veterans allowance, if the recipient were not in receipt of the maximum available, and were in need, then he could be raised to that maximum under the regular terms of the war veterans allowance. That is why we refer to the recipient who is in receipt of the maximum war veterans allowance available. Because if he is not in receipt, and is in need, then he can be brought up to that maximum.

Mr. Green: What about the small pensioner?

Mr. Gregg: Perhaps I had better read the regulation, word for word:

Amount allowed: no recipient may receive assistance in any twelve consecutive months in an amount greater than the difference between his total income including war veterans allowance and income from other sources and the maximum amount of income allowed under the War Veterans Allowance Act, 1946. In no case shall the amount exceed \$120 for a recipient awarded the rate for a single person or \$180 for a recipient of war veterans allowance in the amount of \$70.83 a month if awarded otherwise.

In practice I am told that the receipt of a small pension does not debar him from participation in the assistance fund.

Mr. Green: Even although he is getting a pension of, let us say, \$25; that would allow him about \$25 war veterans allowance. Would a man in that position be entitled to get this assistance? If so, the regulation should be clarified.

Mr. Gregg: With his pension and his war veterans allowance we can bring him up to the maximum permissible income.