

*Veterans Affairs Committee Report*

while we are debating matters of procedure here in the House of Commons unless, of course, the government comes to its senses.

Some of us regret that with all the attention we have been forced to put on the Woods report the whole question of the War Veterans Allowance Act seems to have been lost in our concern about the Woods report. After all, the Woods report deals only with that section of veterans legislation that relates to disabilities, and pensions paid under the Pension Act and some other acts related thereto. But a great many of the veterans of this country get some financial recognition for their condition and suffering, because they served their country in war, only under the War Veterans Allowance Act, and we feel there are improvements that need to be made in that legislation that are just as important as the improvements called for in the Pension Act and other veterans legislation.

Ever since this parliament began I have been pleading with the new minister that the War Veterans Allowance Act be referred to the standing committee along with the Woods report. His answer has been that that is up to the committee. That is one way to answer such a question, but of course it is up to the government to make the kind of motion that will produce an actual reference. I still feel that if the position of veterans generally is going to be considered by the committee it should have before it not only the Woods report and all those matters that relate to disability pensions, but also the War Veterans Allowance Act, an act in which real improvements are needed.

I know we can be told by the minister that changes have been made in recent years. In fact he went back to tell us what veterans were getting in 1919 and 1920. Well, Mr. Speaker, in 1920 I got summer work at 25 cents an hour and thought I was getting pretty good pay. Possibly some people may think that is all I should be getting today. It is no good talking about rates of veterans pensions in those years, or the rates five or ten years ago. The fact is that we are living under a new set of conditions, and if any group of people in our society deserves the attention of government and parliament it is the veterans, their families, their widows and others that they have left behind.

I have made one or two specific references to the War Veterans Allowance Act. There is one item in particular that I admit I have spoken of a good many times and which I think is a piece of hypocrisy to which our

veterans should not be subjected. I refer to the situation that obtains as between the guaranteed income supplement and the war veterans allowance.

When the guaranteed income supplement legislation was put through the House of Commons much was made by the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. MacEachen), then the Minister of National Health and Welfare, about the fact that the income test in the guaranteed income supplement would not take into account any pension received by veterans, whether a disability pension or a benefit under the War Veterans Allowance Act. And that is true. When a person applies for the guaranteed income supplement any money he is receiving under the War Veterans Allowance Act is not counted as income.

Big deal, Mr. Speaker! The same veteran who gets the guaranteed income supplement, despite the fact that he is getting money under the War Veterans Allowance Act, then finds that because of the means test in the War Veterans Allowance Act the money he is receiving as a guaranteed income supplement counts as income for the purposes of the War Veterans Allowance Act, and what he receives under the act is cut back.

We think it is bad enough that there is no improvement for veterans because of this new legislation—at least it was new then—but to maintain that piece of hypocrisy, telling the country and the veterans that war veterans allowance income does not count against their guaranteed income supplement, when the reverse is the case, is no way to treat the veterans of this country. That is an anomaly which I think should be straightened out. It is not something which happened by accident. We debated it at length when we were discussing the guaranteed income supplement, but we could not seem to involve the Minister of Veterans Affairs of that day in any campaign to get the situation changed. But we think it should be changed now.

This is one of the reasons I feel that when the Woods report is referred to the standing committee, and for my part that can be done on Monday, there should also be referred the War Veterans Allowance Act so that the whole position of our veterans can be gone into by that committee. As I have already said, at the risk of seeming to be a killjoy and wanting to spoil some of our members' summer plans I would like to see that committee meet soon rather than in September, a full year from the time when the promise was