

*Interim Supply*

The Legion and other veterans organizations had of course called for a 33½ per cent increase in pension rates. It seems to me quite apparent that the government did not want to give these veterans organizations an opportunity to present their case for the veterans, and particularly they sought to avoid the publicity which would have resulted from the convening of that committee and the presentation of the veterans case by the organizations concerned. In my opinion the government thought that by handling it in this hit and miss manner far less attention would be given to the small increases which have been provided in some cases and the fact that no increases were provided in relation to other veterans.

When we examine the actual increases provided we find that the largest increase is for a single veteran who receives a pension on the basis of total or 100 per cent disability. When these supplementary estimates are finally passed total disability pensioners will receive an increase of \$25 a month. Their yearly rate will then increase from \$1,500 a year to \$1,800 a year. That is a 20 per cent increase and represents the highest increase granted. The increases range from that percentage down to nothing.

When speaking in the budget debate recently I pointed out that a cleaner and helper in the employ of the Department of Public Works receives a salary of \$2,760 a year. There are various other categories of labourers in the civil service who receive the same rate. You might say their wages are on a level with those received by a labourer. When the Pension Act came into force following the first great war the theory upon which it was based and to which this government has always subscribed, and which is supposed to be operative at the present time, was that a 100 per cent disability pensioner should receive a pension based on the wages received by a common labourer.

That theory has gone by the board in practice as far as this government is concerned. As matters stand at the present moment the total disability pensioner is receiving just slightly more than half the wages paid to a common labourer employed in the government service, to say nothing of the even higher wages received in many instances by people in the same classification working outside the government service. When the increase comes into effect the total disability pensioner will receive \$1,800 a year, which is less than two-thirds of the amount received by labourers in the government service. It is evident from this that the government has completely failed to increase veterans pensions sufficiently to meet the increase which

has taken place in the cost of living and to maintain the relative position of the pensioner as compared to the common labourer.

When we come to consider the married pensioner we find that his increase amounts to 17.6 per cent. The widow of a veteran who was killed overseas receives a 15 per cent increase, from \$100 to \$115 a month. From this modest increase of 15 per cent we go to the single man in receipt of war veterans allowance, who receives no increase at all. This also applies to the widow of a man who had been in receipt of war veterans allowance and then died; she receives the same as a married veteran on war veterans allowance, \$60 a month. It is these two groups of people who particularly need help, and they are the very ones for whom no help was provided as far as these increases are concerned.

Since speaking on this matter in the budget debate I have received a considerable number of letters from all across Canada, each of which tells a pitiful story of hardship and extreme difficulty because of the meagre amount of war veterans allowance these people are drawing. Most of the letters constitute a plea as to whether something can still be done at this session to meet their situation, a plea for an increase in the basic amount of the war veterans allowance.

Generally speaking I think there is no doubt that the government is not dealing fairly with our veterans. The Canadian people as a whole expect that adequate pensions and allowances will be paid to those men who have fought for their country.

The total amount of money involved in providing adequate pensions and adequate war veterans allowances would not be very considerable, particularly in relation to the total budget and the total expenditure for many other things.

As far as the increases provided in the supplementary estimates are concerned, they come to a total of \$19,250,000. I would think that even at this late date, surely it might be possible for the Minister of Finance and the government to provide for some increase in the war veterans allowances to those people who are the worst off of all veterans, the single veteran, the widow of a veteran, the widower who perhaps is left with a child to look after.

I know this session is almost at an end; we expect or hope it will end today or tomorrow, or at the latest on Saturday. Even under those circumstances it would be quite possible, if the government should care to do so, to increase those allowances. I know all the members on this side of the house, and I am sure nearly all the members on