

Affairs (Mr. Dubé) expressed by the previous speaker. I am not prepared to give him a vote of confidence until we have action, not excuses, legislation and not a series of promises. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and it is only after action that the minister will be entitled to a strong expression of confidence. I hope the time is not too distant when I, too, can express confidence in the minister.

• (5:10 p.m.)

Without any fear of contradiction, I can say I feel certain hon. members of the House are unanimous concerning the need for changes in the legislation, changes in the regulations and changes in policy. Because I am so strongly convinced that statement is correct, I shall not take the time to repeat what has already been said concerning the excellence of the work of the Woods commission and the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. I believe it is obvious that the only thing that requires repetition is that in the time available as many of us as possible should express to the minister and the government our belief that there is a matter of urgency involved and a need for action. I most certainly agree with hon. members who have said this is a matter of top priority. It certainly is in the constituency of Vancouver East.

There are thousands of veterans in Vancouver East, and thousands of them are members of veterans organizations such as the Royal Canadian Legion and the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans of Canada. All the time they say: when, oh when, is something going to be done? Is the government delaying because month by month and year by year so many of us are dying that there will be fewer and fewer in respect of whom the government will have to accept a greater financial responsibility? This is what the veterans are saying, everybody knows it. I think it is shameful that it should be necessary for our veterans to engage in this type of thinking. It certainly is necessary, however, when we realize that the studies were first commenced over five years ago and we are still awaiting the legislation from the government.

I said I would not repeat what has already been brought to the attention of the minister and the government, but I should like to add the thought that I hope in his deliberations the minister is prepared not only to bring in legislation dealing with the Hong Kong veterans but also Canadian prisoners of war in other areas. One only has to speak to the veterans, as I do so often being a member of both the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans of Canada and the Royal Canadian Legion, to be aware of the effects of the imprisonment, starvation and hell they went through in the camps in Europe, some of them for long periods. I believe this merits immediate consideration. I hope the government will keep this in mind.

I most certainly hope there will be immediate action to resolve a great many of the veterans problems which are brought to the attention of Members of Parliament. I refer of course in particular to the vicious, pressing situation surrounding those who of necessity receive the

Veterans Allowance Increases

War Veterans Allowance. This has been mentioned by many members, particularly by my colleague the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). However, I wish to add my plea for immediate action in this regard because of the numerous cases which come to my attention and which I know come to the attention of other hon. members. I should like to stress something that perhaps is one of the greatest matters of urgency, apart from a change in the regulations and increases in pensions. I refer to the need to get away from something that I know must be a major concern to Members of Parliament in handling veterans problems. I refer to the fact that quite often it is necessary for a member to say he cannot do anything for a veteran because the board states that the condition is a pre-enlistment condition. If I have ever heard a hypocritical statement that is it.

When the government of Canada needed men and women to offer their lives and limbs for Canada, these men and women were examined by doctors and their cards said that they were A-1. Then, they went overseas and thousands did not return. Yet, years later when those who did return suffer from disabilities caused by their experience in war, they are turned down because of a pre-enlistment condition. Mr. Speaker, I know all of us express in our hearts the opinion that if the man has offered his life for Canada when Canada required his services, and when Canada and the government said he was A-1, no government and no country has the right years later to say he cannot receive the allowance he requires because of a pre-enlistment condition. Because of my experience over a long period in handling the cases of veterans I wanted to mention, in addition to all the other arguments, the necessity for recognition of the urgency involved before too many of our veterans pass on to the Great Beyond.

I noted with interest the remarks of previous members about Remembrance Day being two weeks away. Thousands upon thousands of people across Canada will be standing before the Cenotaphs of our country honouring the fallen. That is as it should be. But it brings to mind the statement of the men and women who offered their lives in war, "We shall not fail". The veterans of Canada, Sir, did not fail this country in time of need. I think perhaps the greatest honour we can give, not only to those who died but more specifically to those who came through and lived, is to say that by November 11 the government shall introduce all the various pieces of legislation required to meet the needs of the veterans and to bring into effect the acceptable sections of the report of the Woods commission and of the report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. I conclude by saying, sir, the Canadian veterans did not fail us. Let us not fail them.

Mr. D. W. Groos (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to take part in this debate. I do so at somewhat short notice. I was very interested in, and I should like to say here and now that I support, the motion put forward by the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Mar-