

The Address—Mr. MacDougall

cut out politics. Regardless of our political affiliations, I believe we have given to the veterans fair, impartial and non-political treatment; and I would hope that we might continue to do so.

Certainly the government might rate a bouquet because of the increase in disability pensions made two years ago across the board to the extent of 33½ per cent. That was a magnificent step in aid of those who were recipients of those pensions. However we are now dealing with another division of pensions. The government of the United Kingdom, the government of the United States and that of Canada have for a long time recognized the category of those who, while not suffering from disability, have pre-aged.

Under Bill 181, provided they could qualify, these people were made the recipients of war veterans allowances at the age of 60, or ten years earlier than the age at which the universal old age pension should function. That was a step in the right direction.

We have a great number of these people on the Pacific coast. It is only natural that men and women in that category should come to the banana belt of Canada, and we see them flocking there year after year. They settle on small holdings which do not require strenuous work, where they can rest, and also produce much of the food required for themselves and their families. As the years have passed there has been an ever-increasing flow of these people to British Columbia. The result is that today in that province we have 25 per cent of the total number of recipients of war veterans pensions in Canada. In other words about 73 per cent are distributed throughout the other nine provinces.

As of September 30 we had in this category in Canada some 30,517, as well as 792 dependents, 10,197 widows and 114 orphans, making a grand total of 41,620, involving an annual liability of \$26,640,756. This is the broad picture for the whole of Canada.

As of the same date the figures show that in British Columbia we had 7,447 recipients, 161 dependents, 1,747 widows and 3 orphans, making a total of 9,358, and involving an annual liability of \$5,913,437. This does not include the recipients of war veterans allowances living in that area known as the Peace River bloc in British Columbia, as it is now constituted. At the moment that area is not mapped out.

This is a large number of people and, as I have pointed out, it represents about 26 per cent of the recipients of war veterans allowances. In the past these people have gone to the defence of their king, their queen and their country, on the land, on the sea and

in the air. It seems to me that, having previously decided that they were pre-aged by ten years, a further step than that in Bill 181 might now be taken.

I realize that this will involve certain amendments to the act. The British Columbia members who sat on the veterans affairs committee two years ago kept this question constantly under review. Had it not been for the coronation, I believe that by the end of the last session we might have been able to accomplish a forward step at that time.

However, it is never too late to make a beginning. Those who do not agree with me will say that we cannot afford to open the act so as to admit a great number who are now excluded. This may be so; but the fact remains that Liberalism is always on the march. If we are to be a virile force we must be prepared to meet challenges as they arise. I believe those challenges can be met by the government and members in opposition together, so we will have a continuing veterans affairs committee of the house to advise the government and parliament as to the situation in respect of the recipients of war veterans allowances.

The truth of the whole program is this, that there is not the same urge from the other provincial commands that is found in British Columbia, in which province are domiciled the 26 per cent to whom I have referred. Those of us from British Columbia look upon this step as one that should be taken now, not during the last session of this parliament. It is an immediate necessity. Time waits for no man. The people about whom I have spoken are, in many instances, in dire need of additional assistance.

I suggest to the house through you, Mr. Speaker, that the sooner we are in a position unanimously to agree that this condition requires immediate remedy, the sooner that remedy will be applied. Despite the magnificent charter this government has made available to the veterans of Canada, I would ask it to go the second mile and to see to it that in the future the recipients of war veterans allowances are given a better deal than they have had in the past.

These are good people; they have answered the call and have done their duty as they saw it. From the Atlantic to the Pacific, constantly since 1949, editorially and otherwise, the press of this country has advocated the adoption of legislation such as I now bring to the attention of the house. I believe we can spend our money in no better way than in advancing their cause. There is no better way to do it than by improving their living standards now. Despite the impeding factors to opening