

Pension Act

little extras so that the legislation will then be satisfactory to all veterans on disability pensions and their dependents and to all who have worked for and recognize their need.

Mr. Victor Quelch (Acadia): I am going to be very brief in my comments. The Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Lapointe) and his parliamentary assistant (Mr. Mutch) are in the very happy position of knowing that whenever they bring down any legislation in this house that will improve the position of the veterans they will receive the whole-hearted support of the opposition. We in this group are very glad that at this time the government have seen fit to bring down legislation to increase the basic rate of pension without attaching to it any form of means test. Apparently the government now recognize that they made a mistake last session when they tied an increase in the rate of pension to an unemployability test. That was a form of means test, and a very undesirable form. I feel that by bringing down this legislation the government has fully vindicated the stand taken by the opposition members of the veterans committee last session when they opposed the payment of an unemployability supplement as an alternative to an increase in the basic rate of pension.

However, whilst we are strongly in support of this proposed legislation, I would like to point out that there are certain weaknesses in it. There are certain classes of pensioners who will receive no benefits under this legislation. For instance the married pensioner, receiving a pension award of from 20 to 40 per cent, will receive no benefit if he is already receiving a war veterans allowance. In regard to the single veteran, he will receive no benefit if he is receiving an award of from 15 to 30 per cent, if he is receiving the allowance. I have in my hand—

Mr. Mutch: Will the hon. member permit an interruption?

Mr. Quelch: Yes.

Mr. Mutch: I get a little weary of hearing it suggested that when a piece of legislation grants a man entitlement he does not get it under that particular legislation because under other existing legislation it may be taken away again. That is tantamount to saying that some of us do not get any salary because income tax takes it away. So far as this legislation is concerned, what my hon. friend has just said is untrue. The benefits do accrue. What happens to the money afterwards is subject to other legislation, and further discussion, and in complete honesty I think we should stop saying that.

Mr. Quelch: The point is I think the hon. member is the last one who should use those words "complete honesty". The test of any legislation is, will the person benefit as a result of that legislation?

Mr. Mutch: And the answer is yes.

Mr. Quelch: That is the only criterion. Can you show an income tax assessment which, as a result of its application, will mean that the taxpayer does not get any benefit from an increase in income? He will always get a slight benefit from an increase in income. As a result of this some pensioners will not receive one cent in additional income. Let me quote from the unemployability supplement chart given to the veteran members the last time the committee sat. We find that a pensioner receiving a 40 per cent award, and who is married, receives a pension of \$50 a month. In addition he receives a war veterans allowance of \$41.66 a month, making a total monthly income of \$91.66, or a yearly income of \$1,100. That man will not receive any benefit whatsoever under this legislation, because to the extent that his pension is increased the amount of the war veterans allowance will be decreased.

Mr. Cruickshank: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker; I do not think anyone—I know the hon. member will not—will question that I am as sympathetic as he is to those recipients of the war veterans allowance, and I have demonstrated it in the past. But I submit it is not fair for one member to discuss that legislation and some of the rest of us who would like to discuss it be ruled out of order.

Mr. Quelch: I am not going to discuss war veterans allowance in any way, shape or form. When Mr. Speaker was in the chair he gave us the understanding that so long as we referred only to the effect that one may have on the other he would not rule it out of order. I am not going to discuss the merits or the demerits of the War Veterans Allowance Act. I will even leave out the words "war veterans allowance" in the future.

Mr. Cruickshank: On a point of order, I want to keep the record clear. The hon. member for Acadia is always fair.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Where is Mr. Speaker, anyway?

Mr. Cruickshank: I beg your pardon. The hon. member who has just spoken has said that he is always humble, and as I said on previous occasions he should be. I was ruled out of order in that connection, and so were several other speakers. I would like to speak on it.