

salary in 1944. How can the minister justify this further increase of \$1,000 for the commissioners, and at the same time justify an increase of \$12 a month to a veteran? Under the proposed new scale a totally disabled veteran will receive the huge sum of \$1,044 a year; and I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, that when the pension board declares a veteran a one hundred per cent disability he has to be practically dead. Yet here we are going to give the commissioners another \$1,000, which is only \$44 a year less than the total amount we give a one hundred per cent disability pensioner. I think the house will be much interested in any explanation the minister can give justifying this increase, in view of the increase granted in 1945 and also in view of the miserly increase given the disabled veterans.

There are many matters which will come before the veterans affairs committee. I wish to mention only one, which was also mentioned by the minister today, when he referred to certain remarks made by the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Green) as to the pre-enlistment condition. The minister questioned the figures the hon. member put on *Hansard* showing that some 85,000 young Canadians who were taken in as fit and discharged as unfit were unable to qualify for pensions. The minister thought that figure was wrong. That may be so, but I still say to the minister that there are far too many veterans who were discharged because of disability but who are not in receipt of pensions because the officials of the pension board have ruled that they were suffering from pre-enlistment disabilities which the medical officers were not able to find on enlistment. I would mention also the reaction of many applicants to the manner in which they were treated when applying for pensions. It seems to me every veteran is entitled to every consideration from the officials of the pension board. A veteran should not be shoved around and treated as a lead swinger. In far too many cases the veteran comes back from a pension board hearing embittered by his treatment, full of resentment over the technicalities that have been raised against him, angry because no notice has been taken of the reports or findings of his family doctor or the local medical representative of the board; and even where a pension is granted, in many cases the amount is a mere pittance and not a proper recompense as far as the disability is concerned. The people of Canada are most anxious that every veteran entitled to a pension should get one, and at a proper rate.

[Mr. White (Hastings-Peterborough).]

I was very glad to hear what the minister had to say on the same point because, as I mentioned a moment ago, the public are not satisfied with the small increase in the basic pension. In every case the veteran should have the benefit of the doubt, which he does not receive today. He should be treated with respect and dignity in deference to the great service he has rendered Canada. I repeat that we of this party approve the legion brief, which proposes a basic rate of \$100 per month for one hundred per cent disability.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would especially appeal to all veteran members of this house, irrespective of their party allegiance, and remind them that they have a special duty to perform to their former comrades. Today they are in a position of responsibility and have it within their power to see that a further increase in the basic rate is granted the veterans. I would remind them that veterans do not recognize race, colour, creed or political party. All veterans belong to the same fraternity. Let us who have these responsibilities not fail our former comrades whom we were so glad to have at our side in the days when the going was very tough. And remember, we may need every veteran again in the not too far distant future.

Mr. G. H. CASTLEDEN (Yorkton): Mr. Speaker, this is a bill to amend the Pension Act; to authorize, among other things, an increase in the basic rate of pension; to make statutory certain increases in the salaries of the pension commissioners and other officials, and in one or two minor details to make changes which the minister has said will increase the efficiency and wipe out some of the deficiencies of the old act.

The emergency of the present situation demands that the veterans affairs committee get to work and that this house do something with respect to increasing pensions as rapidly as possible. We are trying to co-operate in getting this bill before the veterans committee in order that they may make their report to the house and the bill may become law, so that these people will have some relief. I believe everyone recognizes this emergency. I think the people of Canada generally have been critical of the government for its failure to act rapidly in this matter. The rapid increase in the cost of living, particularly in the last three years, has made it almost impossible for a veteran in receipt of a pension to carry on. But in our haste to get this legislation through I think the house and the committee must be careful to see that the amounts to be paid are adequate, to see that they will really do the