

Veterans Benefit Act

is eight or ten. I think we are running into confusion here as we were with regard to the legislation that was before us just a little while ago. However, it is also to be noted that despite the fact that this bill amends perhaps ten different acts affecting veterans and despite the fact that there are one or two other pieces of legislation which we now know may go to the special committee on veterans affairs, there are one or two other items of veterans legislation which have not yet been mentioned by the minister but which in our view certainly must be considered by that committee.

As the minister knows, there is a strong feeling all over the house that, without further delay, something should be done with regard to the War Veterans Allowance Act. As he knows, during debate on another question that took place last week, members in all parts of the house expressed great sympathy with the burnt-out pensioners and wanted something done for them at this session. I echo the sentiments of the hon. member for Royal (Mr. Brooks) when I say I hope that the terms of reference of that committee will be broad enough to make it possible for the committee to consider the War Veterans Allowance Act with respect to increasing the amount, raising the permissible income or eliminating the means test, and so on. These are matters which are familiar to all of us.

There are times in parliament when committees are a device for shelving issues. There are committees that have performed that function. But I think it is to be said that amongst the better committees that we have had in parliament, over the years that I have been here, have been the special committees on veterans affairs. I know of one or two others which have been very good committees as well, but the veterans affairs committees have been committees which have addressed themselves directly and sympathetically, on a non-partisan basis, to the needs of our veterans and to the justice that we feel should be accorded to them. When this committee is set up, if it is given the same kind of opportunity that was given to previous committees on veterans affairs, I am satisfied that it will consider these matters sympathetically and carefully; and I am confident that it will bring back to the house recommendations that will be worth while.

I must point out, however, that the basic question will be the terms of reference. If those terms of reference are restricted or are so narrow as to deny to the members of that

committee the right to discuss the Pension Act in all its aspects or the right to discuss the extremely important War Veterans Allowance Act, then the committee will not be able to do the kind of job it has done in the past.

In view of the fact that the committee on veterans affairs is to be set up, it is hardly necessary to discuss this bill at length. As I indicated with regard to the bill that we were considering previously, I should like to see some way found for dealing with necessary amendments to veterans legislation, other than this omnibus type of bill. Perhaps the committee will have a chance to discuss that matter.

On behalf of the members of this group, Mr. Speaker—those who are veterans and those of us who are not—I welcome the announcement that has been made tonight. I trust there will be no detracting from the value of that announcement by limited terms of reference but rather that they will be broad enough so that we can have the kind of veterans affairs committee that will bring back to parliament the recommendations which our veterans so definitely deserve.

Mr. Victor Quelch (Acadia): Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is necessary for me to say very much at this stage. However, I should like to say that we in this group are glad that the benefits of the veterans charter are being made available, by statute, to the Korean veterans. It is a far more satisfactory situation than that of having to depend upon orders in council. We are also very glad to hear the minister say that a special committee on veterans affairs is to be set up. Of course, we would have been better pleased if he had been able to announce that a standing committee was going to be set up. That is something which the various veterans organizations have been asking for year after year and which a number of members in this house have also asked for.

I should also like to join with other members in pleading with the minister that, when this committee is set up, the terms of reference should be made sufficiently wide so that it can deal adequately with veterans problems. I would say that the most pressing need at this time is for amendments to the War Veterans Allowance Act. As a matter of fact, I think I would say that if the terms of reference were going to be so narrow that we could not deal with the War Veterans Allowance Act, it would be better not to set the committee up at all because that would be like adding insult to injury. The main