

War Veterans Allowance Act

continual consultation with the district authorities in an effort to maintain fairness and uniformity.

Mr. Green: The war veterans allowance board has always sat in Ottawa but apparently it is now to start travelling. I am not so sure that that is a good idea unless the board is to be restricted to hearing appeals by veterans from decisions of the district authorities. If this board is to go around from district to district reviewing cases, it is going to make a lot of trouble. If the minister intends the district authorities to do a job they must be given the responsibility. The burden of making these decisions must be left with them and not be subject to review by a board travelling out of Ottawa.

It should be definitely understood whether this war veterans allowance board is to be just an appeal board or whether it is to be a board of review. There is a great deal of difference in the two types of board. Personally I do not think it should be a review board going around to the different districts and interfering with them. My own opinion would be that it should be an appeal board, not a review board.

The war veterans allowance board here in Ottawa will not be in touch with the veterans in the same way as the district authorities will be, and the district authorities should have the right to decide whether a veteran should or should not get an allowance. If they decide that he should not get an allowance then it is quite proper that he have an appeal to the war veterans allowance board, but that board should be restricted to hearing such appeals.

Mr. Cruickshank: Mr. Chairman, I shall be brief because I understand some other legislation is coming up before six o'clock. I agree with the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra except as far as repetition is concerned. My first complaint about the war veterans allowance is that it is not a proper allowance. It does not equal the old age pension. Supplementary payments totalling \$500,000 were put through last year. As I said before, you would need to be a Philadelphia lawyer or come from Ontario to be able to understand the form that must be filled out.

I agree entirely with the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra that this whole procedure should be simplified. If the local authorities think a veteran is entitled to an allowance it should be given to him without all this red tape he must put up with now. I want to tell the minister that there are veterans of the first great war who are unable to have the necessities of life because of the

mass of red tape in his department. I know he does not want that and I do not believe the officials want it, so, for goodness sake, let us wake up to the realities of life and wipe out these things. It should be easy to do.

I believe that this government and this parliament want to do everything possible for the war veterans. I do not like the term "war veterans allowance" because I believe these men have a right to be treated in a proper manner. They served their country so that you and I might sit here in freedom and be well paid and well fed.

An hon. Member: And well watered.

Mr. Cruickshank: Some members from certain provinces are not as wise as they might be when you consider whence they come, but I think we can understand it.

An hon. Member: Coming from British Columbia.

Mr. Cruickshank: If one of my hon. friends wants to make a speech I shall be glad to sit down and let him do so. I want him to get up on his hind legs and make a speech on behalf of the veterans of Canada, not just to voters who are building the car that I am going to pick up in Oshawa next Monday. As I say, I do not think this allowance is adequate and I agree with the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra that the provisions should be simplified. The red tape should be eliminated so that the veteran in British Columbia or in Newfoundland can obtain this allowance without having to go before some red cap in Ottawa.

I have had some experience with these matters on behalf of veterans in my riding. Even though I may not agree with all the provisions of the act I do suggest seriously that they be made more accessible to the veteran without the present unnecessary red tape.

Mr. Brooks: How many districts have asked for this change? My experience in my own district is that they are quite satisfied with war veterans allowances being handled from Ottawa. I think they would be quite satisfied if no change were made. I do not see how a board travelling around is going to simplify matters. I think the chairman of the war veterans allowance board has been doing an excellent job.

We have found in my province that in matters like old age pensions—this is really a form of old age pension for the soldier—when they are turned over to be administered by the province they become looked upon as being more or less political patronage. That should be avoided. The further it is away