

Blinded, The War Pensioners of Canada, The Army, Navy and Air Forces Veterans of Canada, and the Royal Canadian Legion.

The Veterans Affairs Committee also agreed, and that committee has sat since last September considering briefs presented by these organizations. We also considered the white paper presented by the government. We reviewed the 148 recommendations, and we presented a report in June of this year. I am sure that the minister would agree, and that the chairman of the committee will confirm, that there was complete co-operation at all times during our deliberations. I am sure he will also agree that the veterans organizations were most co-operative in compromising on the cost of many of the recommendations advocated by the Woods Committee, in order to expedite legislation. I am also sure he will agree that all concerned gave enough time to the consideration of such a complex report.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Marshall:** Just this month, Mr. Speaker, before the end of the second session, my party offered complete co-operation to expedite the passing of legislation because time means everything to the disabled veterans. I can only appeal once more to the minister and the government to return the consideration by bringing in legislation immediately. I know such legislation is on the list of bills for this session, but since it is number 22 I hope it does not have to wait its turn to come before the House. I also hope this bill will rapidly be given a much higher priority by those who decide what legislation is to come before the House.

Last August, just over one year ago, as a result of the Woods Committee the government tabled its white paper on veterans pensions. So, we should all be ready to admit that we were given enough time to study the complex report of the Woods Committee and its ramifications, as the minister requested.

Probably the most pressing of the recommendations in the Woods Committee Report were numbers 92 and 93 dealing with a basic minimum pension of 50 per cent for all members of the Hong Kong force who were interned as prisoners of war by the Japanese, and that the widows of ex-members of the Hong Kong force be eligible for consideration of an award of widows' pensions under section 25 of the Act. If I may quote from the white paper, Mr. Speaker, it said:

That these veterans deserve special consideration has been recognized by government, and it is now proposed to ask parliament to formally recognize this obligation by proposing a separate act which will provide for a basic minimum pension of 50 per cent for all Hong Kong veterans who apply for it, and who have assessable degrees of disability—The effect of this provision will make widows and orphans who were not in receipt of disability pensions of 48 per cent also pensionable under the act and such pensions would begin with the effective date of the special legislation.

There were only 395 Hong Kong veterans as of 1968 receiving less than a 48 per cent pension. The white paper indicated agreement, and in fact promised special

#### *Veterans Allowance Increases*

legislation over a year ago. An amendment to cover these veterans could have been put before the House any time after the presentation of the white paper and could have been passed at the snap of a finger. But here we are, over a year later, and still nothing has been done.

**Some hon. Members:** Shame.

**Mr. Marshall:** The cost of implementation of this recommendation would be only some \$600,000. Yet the government continues to procrastinate while the bodies of these veterans continue to deteriorate. Those who suffered through four years of the most extreme hardships of torture, of malnutrition and the affliction of avitaminosis, for which there is no cure, continue to await some humane consideration after so many years.

There are some 65 members of this House, Mr. Speaker, who are veterans of World War II, and two who are veterans of World War I—the hon. member for Fort William (Mr. Badanai), and the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker). The majority of these veterans sit on the opposite side of the House. A good number of them sat on the veterans affairs committee. I wonder if they have any humane feelings; they who must know of the suffering of these veterans. I wish they would show some intestinal fortitude by standing up in their caucus meetings and pleading for some reasonable sense of priority in the implementation of legislation for the veterans.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I should like to refer once more to the minister's reply last year in which he quoted a statement made by the right hon. Prime Minister on June 17 last year:

We have to review all aspects of social legislation. We are doing this; we do not want to settle special cases. A special plea can be made not only for the veterans but for old people, for retired civil servants and for all sections of people in society.

Well, bully I say to him, Mr. Speaker, but I also say that the increases for the poor, the aged, the blind and the retarded have not been coming along too rapidly. The white paper on social security is also ready, but that appears pretty far down on the list of impending legislation. I hope it includes some indication of action to implement increases for those burnt-out veterans coming under the War Veterans Allowances Act. The increases for these veterans and their families have not been too rapid or healthy.

● (3:00 p.m.)

The last increase for veterans in this category was in 1966, and we do not hear too much bragging about the single rate of \$105 per month or the married rate of \$175 per month for these veterans. I do not have to remind the House how much below the poverty line these figures are.

It is worth while mentioning, Mr. Speaker, the situation with regard to war veterans allowances, because if ever we have failed our citizens we have failed those who are recipients under the War Veterans Allowance