

War Service Grants Act

War Service Grants Act. All veterans who were on the veterans affairs committee in 1945 and 1946 will recall that the grants act was, of course, one of the most important acts which were before the veterans affairs committee. The committee members spent a great many hours studying this act. I think it speaks well for the care that was taken at that time that there has been no amendment of the grants act up to the present time. I think that is correct, is it not?

Mr. Lapointe: Yes.

Mr. Brooks: The fact that it is now ten years old would indicate, of course, that some changes must be made; and the changes which the minister has suggested this afternoon are very much needed, I am sure. As I said a moment ago, I think they will meet with great favour.

The minister mentioned re-establishment credits, and that they were now extending the time for five years. This in itself is a good move, particularly in the light of the fact that a good many of the veterans have not received their full re-establishment credit. I believe that some have not even applied for the re-establishment credit. Many others have received it only in part.

Then as to the war service gratuity, before 1944, as the minister explained, you had to make application. That is, if you were discharged before 1944 you had to make a personal application. The minister tells us that \$500,000 is still due to some 8,500 veterans; and naturally the department and the government are anxious that every veteran should receive every cent to which he is entitled.

I also approve of the suggestion that they relax the conditions for the mother who is to receive the allowance of her son who had passed away and also that orphaned children are to get re-establishment credits.

I might say that these matters were all considered at the time the committee met some years ago. I am glad that they are now getting further consideration. It is hard to understand, however, just why it is that there are some 187,000 veterans still who have not received their re-establishment credit and that there is an amount of \$37 million still due. I am sure the minister will give us further information about this matter when the bill is under consideration. I was wondering if it was because there were a good many soldiers from the United States and other countries who had enlisted and that these former soldiers of the Canadian army had not applied for any rehabilitation grant. I know that they are very limited with respect to the grants which they may

[Mr. Brooks.]

receive, but if I remember correctly a man from the United States who enlisted in the Canadian army can apply for consideration under the insurance act and can also use his rehabilitation grant or gratuity for purposes of superannuation.

I should like to know from the minister if there are quite a number from other countries who enlisted in the Canadian forces. When he gives this information later on I think it would be well for him to let us know how many deceased veterans there are whose rehabilitation grants have not been applied for and received and how many veterans there are in the United States who have not applied.

A good many Canadian soldiers after coming back from overseas took up residence in the United States and I assume that quite a number of native-born Canadians who went to the United States have made no application. I think it also would be well for us to know what attempt was made to see that information was given to all returned soldiers of the fact that they were entitled to certain gratuities and re-establishment credits.

I am not going to delay the committee to any extent this afternoon. There is a lot more information that we should have, but we are all very anxious to see the bill. I should like to suggest again that a bill of this kind might very well have been referred to a veterans affairs committee. I know the minister may be tired of hearing that a veterans affairs committee should be set up, but I still feel that a bill of this kind amending an act passed ten years ago could very well have been considered by a veterans affairs committee. I know that before such committees you have all the officials of the department present who can give you all the information you need. Thus you have a much more thorough understanding of a bill and you also have the advantage of having representatives of the Canadian Legion and other veterans organizations present to give their opinions and express the views of veterans. I suggest again that this and other legislation relating to veterans should be sent to a veterans affairs committee.

Mr. Herridge: As one who has had the pleasure of being a member of veterans affairs committees throughout the years I must say, like the hon. member for Royal, that we are very pleased that the government has given effect to several suggestions made to that committee on a number of occasions. I notice that the minister says that the time within which a veteran may apply for re-establishment credits is going to be extended for a period of five years. When the Canadian Legion made representations to the cabinet