

War Veterans' Allowance Act

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Let me repeat what the Minister said:

I want to emphasize this afternoon that one of the first things to which the Department of Veterans Affairs should give attention is this matter of increasing the ceiling on the war veterans allowance. For instance, take the veteran who has reached the age of 70 years. If he has no other income but his war veterans allowance, owing to the ceiling he can obtain only part of his war veterans allowance because he is also a recipient of the old age pension. If he is single he can receive a total of only \$820 a year.

He goes on to say:

Then there is the disability pensioner. These things are not new. I know hon. members have heard them discussed in the veterans committee. We brought in amendments and pressed for these considerations in 1952 and 1955.

Mr. Brooks: What is wrong with that?

Mr. Tucker: Well, the minister said there that the person should not receive a smaller amount of old age security on account of being able to draw the war veterans allowance.

Mr. Brooks: I said we should increase the ceiling, which we have done.

Mr. Tucker: What my hon. friend pressed for, and he will not deny it, was that these people should be able to get both in full. This is what they committed themselves to. I must say I think hon. members opposite should be so anxious. I can say things about their government that they cannot say, and I think they should be anxious that all possible is said to see that their government carries out the promises which they held out to the people in the election campaign. Instead of some of the backbenchers looking at me frowningly and finding fault, they should be saying, "Well, after all, this should be said to our government". We would like to have the government carry out its promises.

What is the position with regard to married veterans in this regard? This is one of the main things brought out by hon. members opposite when they were in the opposition. Take the ceiling for a married veteran. It is set at \$1,740. If he is an old age security recipient he can get a total of \$1,760. I would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that when all they had to do was raise it another \$20 to carry out their promises to the old married veteran they would not have actually appeared to break their promise for the sake of that amount. But they have not even gone that length with respect to the old veteran.

I am glad that they went as far as they did because I think there is a great deal to be said for what the Prime Minister, then in the opposition, and the present Minister

[Mr. Tucker.]

of Public Works and others said about it. They said that old age security was paid to everybody as a matter of right, that the war veterans contributed to it and receiving it should not cut down what they would get by way of war veterans allowance.

But the thing that I find difficult to understand is what prevented the minister and the government from carrying out these promises. This is the question. They used to say, "Why does the government not do these things?" They used to hint there was perhaps some hidden hand. Surely any such alleged influence has not begun to operate already on the government which is so brand new in office. The brand has practically not worn off yet, and here they are not carrying out this fundamental promise.

Mr. Fraser: The hon. member is trying to belittle something he knows is good.

Mr. Tucker: I said this was the sort of bill that has been brought into parliament over and over again. We made this difference. Invariably, except in the session this spring, when we brought proposals into parliament we referred them to the veterans affairs committee.

Mr. Brooks: Not always.

Mr. Tucker: Almost invariably, I will say. Admittedly, I think there was some reason for not doing it in this spring's session before the election. However, I do not recall any time prior to that when this course was not followed. I do not insist that is so, but I say almost invariably this sort of legislation was referred to a veterans affairs committee. Almost all parties thought this procedure was good. I know the minister was one of those who thought it was a splendid thing because you could get representations from organizations of ex-service men; you could get representations from those in touch with the veterans through welfare organizations who know how hard it is to live on the amount granted by this legislation; you could get representations from those officials who are responsible for raising the money, and so on. Then, the veterans affairs committee, having given far more time to the study of this measure than we can possibly give in this house and do the other necessary business, could then make representations to the government.

As the hon. member knows, time and again the previous government acceded to those representations at times in a very great way. The other day I referred to an occasion I believe in 1948 when the government brought in a bill providing a 10 per cent increase in pension. As a result partly of representations