

Supply—Veterans Affairs

reduced deficit, and what the minister has just said this afternoon. The fact is that we are dealing with a deficit which is over a million dollars greater than that in the preceding year. I cannot see where the minister has given us any concrete reasons for believing that we will not be called upon next year to vote an even greater deficit than that for which we are asked this year.

Item agreed to.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Loans and investments—

634. To provide for purchase of land and permanent improvements; cost of permanent improvements to be effected; removal of encumbrances; stock and equipment; refund of surplus to veterans (section 19); and for protection of security under the Veterans Land Act—further amount required, \$1,425,000.

Mr. Wright: May I call to the attention of the minister the matter of making loans as well as grants available for the purchase of farms in western Canada. Out there, there are numbers of large farms on the market, which have been operated as units. Some returned men are desirous of going on the land but, as individuals, they find it impossible to secure these farms, because they are too large. However, if they operated co-operatively, and if loans as well as grants were made available, they could purchase these farms for operation co-operatively. We have had considerable experience in Saskatchewan in the operation of such farms, and such operation has worked out successfully. I suggest it would be advisable for the minister at this time to give consideration to a request which has been made by, I believe, the Saskatchewan government, that these loans be made available to returned men who wish to take part in co-operative farming. Co-operative farming has been done successfully where grants have been made available, and this has been of great assistance to the returned men.

However, they would ask the minister to go a little further, and make loans as well as grants available.

Mr. Gregg: I shall study the situation. Item agreed to.

The Chairman: Only items 627 and 628 are left for consideration. We will proceed with the first of these:

627. War veterans allowances—further amount required, \$60,000.

Mr. Green: The committee will notice that one of these items asks a further amount for war veterans allowances, while the second is for a further amount in the special assistance fund, from which extra payments can be made to recipients of war veterans allowance. It is obvious that the Department

of Veterans Affairs underestimated the amount that would be required. That means that they underestimated the hardships and sufferings of the veterans entitled to war veterans allowance.

That is the first point I wish to make. My second point is that in the break-down of the item, as set out at page 14, we find that a third of the amount required for war veterans allowances is for veterans of the second world war. I do not know what proportion of the special assistance fund is to be applied to help those veterans. It is now perfectly obvious however that the war veterans allowance is becoming of great importance not only to the veterans who served in the first world war, but also to those who served in the second.

I suggest the time has now come to increase these war veterans allowances to the amount received by old age pensioners. The veteran of both world wars is the charge of the dominion government. As such he should receive just as much as is paid to a civilian who is primarily the charge of his or her province. The time has come to give consideration to an increase in war veterans allowances.

Furthermore, I would urge again upon the minister the necessity of setting up at this session a special committee to deal with veterans affairs. He is proposing changes in the War Veterans' Allowance Act. He proposes to bring in men who served in the allied forces, and is also proposing to decentralize the administration so far as the making of awards is concerned.

These are important changes in the act—sufficiently important, I suggest, to call for the setting up of a special committee. This is not the opportune moment to discuss the matter at length, but I would ask the minister whether or not under the circumstances he would reconsider the stand taken by the government, to the effect that there will be no increase in the war veterans allowance, and that there will be no special committee at this session. Is the minister not willing to reconsider those decisions?

Mr. Wright: May I support the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra in what he has said with respect to setting up a committee to study war veterans allowances and other matters affecting veterans. Today the war veterans allowance is \$40.41, I believe, and in at least three of the provinces the old age pension exceeds that amount. In addition, in at least three of the provinces, old age pensioners get complete medical services whereas our war veterans get only partial medical services.