

*Pension Act and Other Acts*

• (1640)

On April 16, I received the following answer:

Dear Mr. Godin:

My assistants having given me a report on the case of Mrs. Jane Doe from Ville Les Saules, I can now answer the letter you sent me on that matter.

Following your letter from January 26 last, a department official went to see Mrs. Doe to inquire about her situation and try to find a way of providing her with additional help under the existing legislation. At the time of that visit, the income of Mrs. Doe was made of benefits she receives under the Old Age Security Act and the War Veterans' Allowance Act; those benefits provided her with the maximum income authorized for a widow under the War Veterans' Allowance Act, namely \$145 per month.

As the increase in maximum yearly allowances was approved by Parliament, the monthly income of Mrs. Doe is thus \$16 higher.

On the faith of information obtained by the department official during his interview with Mrs. Doe, it seems that the coming into force of those income increases would greatly contribute to iron out your correspondent's financial difficulties.

During the interview, our representative has brought out all the possibilities of assistance available to Mrs. Doe, particularly from the Army Welfare Fund and similar organizations—

—such as the Saint-Vincent-de-Paul and other organizations.

On with the quotation:

Unfortunately, it seems that Mrs. Doe's needs did not come under the criteria established by the administrators of these organizations.

I thank you for your interest in the welfare of this veteran's widow and I sincerely regret that the only additional assistance available to her is that resulting from the recent amendments to the War Veterans' Allowance Act.

Yours truly,

Jean-Eudes Dubé

Mr. Speaker, I personally visited this lady who is 66 years old. She is the widow of a soldier and she lives in a hovel where she has to pay \$250 a year for heat. She wants to move, as the song says, but she cannot afford to do so. Apart from the rent, she has to pay additional taxes for snow removal, garbage removal, etc. Being truly short of money, she has even closed the switch on her hot water tank because, she says, "in this way, I save \$2.50 per month".

This lady also tells me: I do not understand why the minister can do nothing to help me, and I do not understand why I should be content with \$161 a month when Mrs. Laporte is receiving \$16,000 a year. I know that Mr. Laporte died while on duty; my husband also died while in the service. Why is there such a big difference between my pension and that of Mrs. Laporte?

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that Mrs. Laporte needs \$16,000 a year. But, truly, I remain puzzled faced with the analysis made of the two cases. As Mr. Laporte was a provincial minister, Mrs. Laporte is a provincial widow who receives \$16,000 a year from the federal government. In the case of the widow of a federal employee, the limit is \$161 a month.

To my mind, this situation is not only ridiculous but it smacks of the federal government program, and specially that of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), which incites people to revolution. One cannot look at these two situations and remain cool over the whole thing, it is so revolt-

[Mr. Godin.]

ing. It is revolting for the serviceman's widows who is ill-treated and it is revolting for all her relatives and friends.

Unfortunately, servicemen's widow are not the only ones who are deprived. We have the impression that the present situation is really wished for by the Prime Minister, who seems pleased to see people rising against each other, being jealous of one another.

Mr. Speaker, an increase in allowances for the eligible is fine. However, I would not want to let go unnoticed the qualification method for these pensions.

The disability clause is the one that is most confusing. The treatment inflicted on some veterans following certain tests they have to undergo in front of the physician of the department responsible for these allowances, is unbelievable.

As an illustration of what actually happens, I will read into the record a letter concerning an application made by a veteran. This letter was mailed on January 8, 1970 by the Canadian Pension Commission to a veteran of the Portneuf riding and I quote:

Dear Sir:

With reference to our former correspondence and to your letter received last December 29, I have to inform you that following the recent consideration of your case by the appeal board, the commission has decided that your eligibility for the benefits of the pension act in respect—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order. I hesitate to let the hon. member proceed with his comments in the way he presently does. I have to call his attention to the fact that the bill now before the House obviously purports to amend the War Veterans' Allowance Act, but I do not think that the Chair could allow, at this moment, a general debate on all aspects of that legislation.

The bill now before us provides for an annual increase in pensions, based on the cost of living index, but I do not believe that the Chair can, on this basis, authorize the hon. member to deal with the allocation of pensions or with decisions of the Canadian Pension Commission.

The hon. member who spoke a while ago before the hon. member for Portneuf (Mr. Godin) has shown a tendency to wander in the same field and when the Chair was about to intervene because he was speaking about Canadian veterans living in the United Kingdom, he reverted to the question now being debated. I would ask the hon. member for Portneuf even though he may wish the Chair to allow him to complete reading of this letter, to come back to the matter under consideration as soon as possible.

**Mr. Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I see that you realize that this is the time if ever to discuss the fate of veterans. After all, if we do not discuss it today I wonder when we will be able to do so. However, not only will I comply with your request, but I will spare the House the first letter which I was reading and quote only the reply to it.

This letter was addressed to me by the Department of Veterans Affairs and followed on the correspondence already exchanged. It reads in part:

According to the information which I have just received, Mr. Smith is eligible under the Pension Act because of his hallux valgus with plantar calluses, an ailment which he suffered prior to his enlistment and which was aggravated in a proportion of two