

To turn to a few of the details, it seems to me there are certain things that will overload the work of this review board. One has to do with the right of the pension commission to reconsider a matter. As the bill reads, this can only be done if the review board agrees to its being done. It appears to me that hundreds, if not thousands of cases of this kind will go up to the review board and clutter up its operations. Many of these cases are such that they could easily be dealt with by the commission itself at the lower level; if the workload of the review board is cluttered up with them the board will not be able to do the humane job that is called for in the name of the veterans.

Generally speaking, veterans have been pleased with the work of the Pension Commission. Certainly, those who have got their pensions have been pleased. Veterans organizations have had to admit that the Commission has done a good job over the years. Nevertheless there has been enough dissatisfaction, enough feeling that provision for a final review was unsatisfactory, to lead, now, to the setting up of a pension review board. I plead that we should not create a court situation but work out a more humane arrangement in which a veteran will really be given an opportunity to have his case heard sympathetically.

One of the recommendations on this point was ours. I am referring to recommendation number 22 from the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, and I should like to read it into the record.

**Leave to Re-Open Appeals:** The Veterans Organizations propose that there would be no requirement for a "leave to re-open" procedure before the proposed Pension Review Board. If new grounds or evidence exist, the application for "Leave to re-open" would be the responsibility of the Commission. When the applicant has exhausted his procedural rights before the Commission he would be entitled to have his case reviewed by the Pension Review Board. In a case which had previously been adjudicated upon by the Pension Review Board, and no new grounds or evidence existed, the Review Board would review the case a second or subsequent time, should the applicant's representative request this action. This is believed to be in keeping with the basic concept of the Woods Committee, which was to the effect that there should be no "finality" in applications under the Pension Act.

Your Committee concurs in this proposal and so recommends.

This is what the veterans wanted. I believe it is what Parliament wants to provide—that in this important matter of seeing that justice is done to veterans there should be no finality, no point at which a veteran is told: There is nothing more you can do. The situation thus envisaged is not established if in setting up this new board we hamstring it with a lot of ground rules and red tape which defeat the purpose of the committee's recommendation. This is a detail we can examine when we get into the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs on this bill, but I give notice now that I would like to see the ground rules for the pension review board made more flexible and more humane so that the purpose we have in mind might really be met.

I move on to one or two other things I should like to speak about. I welcome the clause of the bill which provides for the stabilization of World War II pensions.

### *Pension Acts*

As the minister says, it took many years after the first world war to take this action in the case of those veterans. Now, at last, we are doing it in the case of World War II veterans. There are a number of other provisions in the bill having to do with dependants and their education, accidents which occur off-duty and so on—quite a long list of things which are good and which make the bill such that it can be said to be an improvement in our veterans legislation. However, as the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe said so well, no matter how much we improve the administrative arrangements, if we fail to show proper concern in terms of disability pension rates and in terms of the amounts granted under the War Veterans Allowance Act, the veterans will ask: What was the use of the Woods Report; what was the use of spending all the hours which were spent on this measure? So I hope that after we have got this bill through, and after members in all parties have had a chance to speak on it, the government will reconsider the rates which the minister announced on December 2, shortly before the Christmas recess.

Returning to the bill itself, there are two things which are not contained in it. I regret they are not there. The first is a provision for automatic increases in pensions at certain ages. This, I have to admit, is a point we lost in the committee, but that is no reason it could not have been put in this bill. The Woods Report recommended it and the veterans organizations pressed very hard for it. This, it seems to me, is something we can all readily understand—that as veterans get older their needs become greater, their capacity for making money on the side lessens. It is a sensible and realistic proposal that in certain circumstances disability pensions should move upward, even all the way to the 100 per cent pension at a certain age. As a matter of fact, I think this is a principle which could well be applied to old age pensions generally, but here would be a good place at which to start. This is a question on which we were divided in the committee. We who wanted this proposal accepted were out-voted, but I still hope the government might consider its adoption.

There is one other provision which we approved and which was recommended in the committee's report but which is not to be found in the bill before us. Hon. members who are on the Veterans Affairs Committee will be able to guess at once what it is. I refer to recommendation No. 106, which consists of one sentence:

• (4:40 p.m.)

That a proportionate pension be paid to a widow where a pensioner in receipt of pension of less than 48 per cent dies.

Recommendation 107 is similar and would have had the same effect with regard to dependants other than a widow. Although we did not win the vote on recommendation 107, we did win the vote on recommendation 106, which I have just read, and again this recommendation is part of our report. It is listed with those matters in which we concur. True, the vote was not unanimous, but it was a majority vote and that becomes the committee's decision.