

pensions, and some \$79 million in war veterans allowances out of a total operating budget of about \$15 billion, that does not frighten me and I do not think it frightens any member of parliament.

The hon. member also suggested that this might be a swan-song policy on the part of the department in the remaining short time that I shall be here. Mr. Speaker, I do not think the government will be magnanimous enough only to make it comfortable for me in the short time that I remain in the department. In any case, I think that the evil one does, just like the good, lives after one and I think that the influence of the legislation we are considering tonight will certainly be an abiding one on the government in the future.

The one concern I have at present is the backlog of cases. The hon. member suggested that there were 5,500 or 6,000. I have to bring him the bad news that as of tonight there are 7,700 cases. Because of the legislation that was introduced by my predecessor, avenues for appeal regarding pensions were opened to a great number of new people, and there has been a revival of a number of old applications made in the past. We are doing the best we can to hurry them along, to catch up with the backlog but at the same time not to disturb or depreciate the calibre of the decisions rendered.

Other hon. members have discussed the basic rates. The hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) took issue with the increase that we are allowing to take care of the cost of living index and said we were all wrong. The hon. member happens to be all wrong, and not us, because he was working from the assumption that the index was 100 per cent whereas the points are 130 and 135, and the increase in the cost of living last year was 4.7 per cent, an increase in points from 130 to 135, which works out to 3.6 per cent on the basis of 100.

I do not want to do any more arithmetic, Mr. Speaker, but we were given some arithmetic by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. I do not want to suggest that socialist mathematics are accurate, and I do not want to provide any Liberal mathematics except to remind him that somewhere in the Bible that he knows so well where it says, "The liberal doeth liberal things."

I shall rest my case on some mathematics provided me by public servants. In the case that the hon. member cited I would tell him that on the new basis of a war veterans allowance, 100 per cent for a single person will be \$180.36. I think that is not far from the computation he made. The ceiling rises from \$161 to \$165.36 and there is \$15 exemption added to that.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): In other words, both are being added. That is good.

Mr. Laing: I might also assure him that the orders in council to which I referred have now been executed. I think I need say no more at the present time, Mr. Speaker, except that I appreciate the consideration which hon. members on all sides of the House have given this bill. I hope it moves along as quickly as possible. It is restricted to a very small section of the assistance towards veterans and in no way whatsoever impairs the right of this House, of members of the House or of the veterans' organizations themselves to continue to press us for an increase in the

basic rates. As a matter of fact, we have received some representations on this already and my officers have done some work to give indicated costs to us of a variety of increases that might be made possible, of course always subject to the resources that the government has at the time. Again I thank hon. members who have participated in this debate.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to mention to the House the desirability of giving consent to deal with order No. 30, the report stage of Bill C-207. There are a number of report stage amendments attached to the notice paper. With consent, we might deal with those if they are in order. When we have dealt with them, then we can consider putting off further discussion of the report stage until the House has had an opportunity to look at report stage amendments which have been filed by the official opposition and which will appear on the notice paper tomorrow.

Further, if before ten o'clock we have reached the limit of our study of Bill C-207 for today, I would suggest to the House, as a matter of advance warning, that we consider dealing until ten o'clock with the report stage of Bill C-2. There are some committee amendments to that bill, and apparently there is unanimity. There have been no fresh amendments and it might be possible to deal with that bill this evening following whatever progress we make on Bill C-207.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, the course proposed by the minister meets with our approval. We have no objection at all to giving consent wherever necessary to advance the discussion of Bill C-207 at the report stage, subject to the proviso to which the minister has referred and the caveat which I now file, that this consent is without prejudice to our right to deal with the amendments we have tabled today and which will be up for consideration tomorrow. I think we would be prepared to deal with this matter tomorrow to the extent that it is possible to do so, and we will give consent for that purpose. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we are quite prepared to now deal with the amendments already before the House to the extent that the Chair wants to give them serious consideration.

• (2110)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, we gladly concur in the proposal to proceed now with the report stage of Bill C-207, at least for the purpose of finding out whether the amendments that are on the notice paper are in order.

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OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING ESCALATION OF PENSIONS, RESIDENCE REQUIREMENTS, INCREASE IN GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-207, to amend the Old Age Security Act, as reported (without