

War Veterans Allowance Act

each district. It is also the intention that the members of each district authority shall be officials then in those district offices. For instance, it might well be that the chairman of the committee would be the senior administrator, or the second in command in the district. Depending upon each district, of course, one of the members may be a representative of the Veterans Land Act administration, if such representation would be useful and would be the means of co-ordinating and unifying all the information. As will have been guessed at once, the official who has been chiefly responsible up to now for obtaining information on applications, and investigating them, will play an important part and more than likely would be the secretary of the district authority. I hope that answers the hon. member's question.

Mr. Green: Not quite. Will the authority set up act continuously? For instance, will A, B and C be appointed the authority in the Vancouver district and deal with all applications, or will three officials be picked out from the department to work on war veterans allowances for one month, and a different group be picked for the next month? The act is so worded that either procedure could be followed. This brings up the question as to whether it would not be wise to have one group dealing with all the applications, so that a procedure may be established in the district, rather than to have different sets of officials acting at different times.

Mr. Gregg: I am glad the hon. member has raised the point, because that is exactly our intention, namely that there shall be continuity, and that the persons constituting this district authority shall be in a general sense permanent. Of course there would have to be changes from time to time, as there are in other posts; but it is our intention that to all intents and purposes those constituting the district authority shall be permanent.

Mr. Green: Under this part the new authorities are given very wide powers in dealing with applications. Indeed, I believe their powers are just as wide as those possessed by the war veterans allowance board. In the event of the granting of an application by the district authorities, is the veteran to be faced with an appeal by the department to the war veterans allowance board in Ottawa, or will such award be left untouched?

There is provision in the new part for appeal by veterans if they are dissatisfied with awards by district authorities. However, the sections are not clear as to what is to be done in the event of a successful application by a veteran. Is it to be the practice that a favour-

able award by a district authority will be final, or is there to be an appeal by the department to the war veterans allowance board here in Ottawa?

Mr. Gregg: No award is final in the absolute sense, as my hon. friend knows. I believe I would be answering his question if I were to say that it is the intention that an award made by a district authority shall stand, subject to review later either by the district authority or by any member of the board. But it is not the intention that members of the board, as they visit districts, shall immediately review the awards made by a district authority to ascertain whether or not they were correctly made.

Mr. Green: This is an important matter, because the new district authorities are given the power to review their own decisions. In effect they may keep on dealing with an application. That of course is the jurisdiction of the present war veterans allowance board as set out in the old act. It does seem to me that, in view of these facts, if a district authority makes a favourable award the war veterans allowance board at Ottawa should keep out of the picture and not interfere with such favourable award.

My understanding of the minister's explanation made earlier in the discussion on the bill was that the war veterans allowance board is to be turned into an appeal board, and that its chief job will be to deal with appeals by veterans from unfavourable decisions made in the districts. If that is so there cannot be such objection to the change; but if on the other hand the members of the war veterans allowance board are now to go around from district to district reviewing decisions made in the districts, then I believe there will be a great deal of difficulty.

Mr. Gregg: I believe I can answer the question by repeating what I said two or three weeks ago. As the hon. member has pointed out, I did indicate that members of the board will now be able to spend more time in the districts than they have in the past. They will be able to have appearing before them those applicants who have felt that they have been treated unfairly. I stated also that it will be the duty of members of the board to make absolutely certain that fairness and uniformity are maintained right across the country. It would be difficult to set out exactly how they would do that. I think they will have to look over what has been done and discuss the whole situation with the district authorities. I can assure my hon. friend that they are not going to sit down and say, "You have made mistakes on this and we are going to cancel it out and make new decisions right away." There will be

[Mr. Gregg.]