

Motions for Papers

tures. The hon. member who just spoke indicated that he is chairman of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. He has done his best on that committee but I do not know why he was reviewing things that happened in the past. What we want to know about are the things that are going to happen in the future.

One of the most important of these came to light in the last couple of days when the old age security bill came before the House to provide for an increase of 5 per cent in the basic rate of pension, raising it by \$5.30 and the OAS and GIS by \$9.16. With the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), I have been pressing the minister this past week to make those amounts exempt for those war veterans over the age of 65 who are receiving war veterans allowance. We have received evasive answers to the effect that they are going to be dealt with fairly, but unless we keep pressing this matter, nothing will ever happen.

Mr. Dupras: Oh, come on.

Mr. Marshall: I heard somebody say "oh, come on." Certainly I know that the Department of Veterans Affairs has done a lot of good for veterans and I have complimented the minister on this. But strangely enough, Mr. Speaker, in that great reef of documents that the Prime Minister read the other day there was not a word about the war veterans in our country. There are 900,000 of them and with their dependants the number climbs to three million, yet there was no mention of them until we brought the matter up in the House.

The government keeps bragging about what they have done for the veterans. They seem to forget, however, that in 1914, over 54 years ago, a commitment was made that the veterans of Canada in the first world war and subsequent wars would be looked after by the Parliament and the government of Canada. The government may brag about what has been done in the last two or three years but they should see the suffering of those veterans who are considered burnt out at age 60. If it had not been for the veterans of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, a lot of us would not be here today trying to deal with the problems of the country and the 5,000 poverty-stricken Canadians who live in this wealthy nation.

The government should not be too smug about what has happened in the past but should be considering what can be done for those veterans who are in the 70 to 80 years of age bracket today who are not getting the benefit of the commitment that our predecessors made some 54 years ago.

I have to bring up one matter which disturbs me. If the chairman of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs thinks that the press is going to pay any attention to veterans affairs, he has another thought coming. The irresponsibility of the press is demonstrated by the ignorance of most Canadians regarding matters relating to veterans. I could stand in the middle of the House of Commons and do bayonet drill, but nobody would pay any attention because the veterans who built a base for this country 54 years ago are forgotten.

Mr. Dupras: That is not true, you know.

Mr. Marshall: It is true.

Mr. Dupras: Stop playing politics.

Mr. Marshall: "Politics" the man says. If there was ever any politicking it was in every word that came from him.

On a number of occasions I have told the Minister of Veterans Affairs that I respect what he is trying to do, but the fault lies with the government. It is just baloney to say that anybody is being political. I can only say that I hope the other notices of motion on this subject will not be treated in such a ridiculous fashion.

Mr. H. T. Herbert (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) seems to think that because the opposition, by their right, have the opportunity to bring up such subjects as they wish in this House, it is all right to suggest that no thought is being given to the veterans in the legislation under discussion. This matter has been under active discussion, Mr. Speaker, certainly between myself and the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) as well as the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald), to ensure that there will be the necessary legislation or order in council so that veterans will benefit from the increase in the old age pension. We hope this legislation will be passed by this House, effective in the month of October. I was surprised, having heard the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) ask a supplementary question, to hear the suggestion that we are playing politics. Surely the opposition is playing politics, as that question was an attempt to get on the record the suggestion that only the opposition ever thinks about our veterans.

● (1740)

Mr. Marshall: What happened last week, when I asked a question and got an evasive answer?

Mr. Herbert: I welcome this opportunity to participate in this debate, for surely there are all too few occasions when we can speak in general terms about the veterans charter and the way in which it has been and is being administered.

I consider that in certain respects Canadian veterans have been most fortunate. I believe that the veterans charter has been, and continues to be, the most comprehensive, constructive program ever developed for men and women who have placed their lives, voluntarily in most cases in Canada, at the disposal of their country in time of war. Indeed, they could be considered to be doubly fortunate, for the administration of that compendium of excellent legislation has been of an extremely high order. Dedicated public servants have given an imaginative, positive, humane and personal service to their clients, the war veterans and the widows and the orphans of those who gave their lives. Their efficiency and effectiveness means that we hear little about them. Like the water in a well or a good wife in a home, they are taken for granted as long as they fulfil their functions satisfactorily.

But we do hear, or read, from time to time suggestions that the veterans affairs portfolio is an anachronism; that with the last major war ending 28 years ago the ministry has outlived its usefulness and should, in fact, have been phased out years ago. Such statements are based on a pitiful ignorance of the veterans charter legislation and its