

have received a hundred letters from ten to fifteen non-pensioned widows associations. I received one a few days ago from the minister's own city, Vancouver, from the Canadian Combat Veterans' association, enclosing a clipping from the July 7 edition of the Vancouver *Sun*. This item is very short and it is well worth reading:

At a recent meeting of the Veterans Dependents League a resolution to wire Ottawa for immediate assistance was unanimously passed, and the following telegram was sent on Monday to Prime Minister W. L. Mackenzie King:

"Veterans Dependents League, Vancouver, Mrs. E. A. Darville, president, strongly urges immediate action regarding desperate condition of non-pensioned widows of veterans of last war, most beyond age of employment, and not eligible for old-age pension. For full exposition of facts see booklet, 'A National Disgrace', by Walter H. Kirchner, M.C., D.C.M."

May I compliment the minister on his action last year in sending this matter to the pensions committee, and thank him for his kindness in arranging for me to speak before the committee on behalf of non-pensioned widows. I will not take the time to repeat what I said on that occasion, but I might refer to a small fraction of it. The facts that stand out as warranting consideration by the minister of the non-pensioned widows' case are these. In the first place, in Australia if a soldier dies his widow continues to receive the pension he received during his lifetime.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): Her portion of the joint pension.

Mr. MacNICOL: Her portion of the joint pension which her husband received during his lifetime. The United States government is now giving a pension of \$30 a month to the widows of all soldiers whose husbands were drawing a small pension or were not drawing pensions at all. I believe the departmental officials last year stated before the committee that there were 6,000 great war soldiers deceased who in their lifetime drew less than 50 per cent pension but were drawing some pension at the time of death. I believe figures were submitted to show that approximately 25 per cent of the widows had either remarried or had died, thus reducing the possible pensionable number to 4,500. I remember that further figures were submitted showing that if a means test were used to determine whether non-pensioned widows should receive pension it would be found that approximately another 25 per cent were well enough off, either through the receipt of money from their husbands' estates, or through funds derived from their own possessions, to enable

[Mr. MacNicol.]

them to exist comfortably. That would further reduce the number to 3,375 who would be actually in want of a pension. If we followed the plan adopted in the United States and granted \$30 a month to non-pensioned widows entitled to pensions under these circumstances, that would mean only \$1,215,000 a year. Perhaps I should let the matter rest there. The first widows to be taken care of are those of deceased soldiers, at least to the extent that I have mentioned. I appeal to the minister to try during the recess to figure out some way whereby that small number of non-pensioned widows actually in want can be taken care of at the rate of \$30 a month, because anything less than that would not be fair to the soldier's widow. The old age pensioner gets \$20 a month, and the soldier's widow, considering the sacrifice her husband made, is perhaps worthy of a little more consideration.

Mr. GRAYDON: I support the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. MacNicol) in his very excellent appeal on behalf of a body of our citizens who I think should receive the minister's attention. I add my word of approval to what the hon. member has said, and I do so necessarily quite briefly in the closing hours of the session.

Mr. GILLIS: I do not think there is any necessity for any member of the house to elaborate on the justice of the widows' cause, on whose behalf these hon. members have spoken. The last parliamentary committee that examined into the question of pensions generally recommended that this particular group of widows be brought under the War Veterans' Allowance Act, and suggested that some relief might be afforded in that direction. Nothing has so far been done with regard to that recommendation. Where does that matter stand now?

Mr. ROSS (St. Paul's): May I add my word of support to what has been said? We must remember that all these women are getting older and there is far more necessity now to make provision for them than there was before. Something should be done.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): The hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. Gillis) is quite correct. Last year this question was very carefully considered by the parliamentary committee on pensions and an able plea was made by, among others, the hon. member for Davenport, on behalf of these non-pensioned widows. The recommendation of last year was that the govern-