

*Old Age and Veterans' Pensions*

on disability pensions, mentioned here previously by the hon. member for Fort William (Mr. Badanai), which undoubtedly is the most comprehensive overhauling of veterans legislation since the end of the second world war. This white paper which is before the standing committee, on which I have the privilege to serve, is of course based on the 148 recommendations of the Committee to Survey the Work and Organization of the Canadian Pension Commission or, in other words, the Woods committee.

As the full name of the committee indicates, basic rates were not within its terms of reference. The essence of the white paper, which incorporates roughly four-fifths of the 148 Woods committee recommendations, is of course to streamline the Pension Act and its administration and to place more emphasis than ever on the human element to ensure that the Pension Act is up to date and designed to serve our contemporary standards of efficiency and social justice.

Mr. Speaker, at present there are about 950,000 veterans in Canada. Of these, some 136,000 and some 30,000 widows and dependants receive disability pension as of right amounting to nearly \$250 million every year. Therefore, these pensions and the way in which they are administered under the Pension Act by the Canadian Pension Commission are a very important contribution to the improvement of the quality of life of these very special people to whom we all owe so much.

Perhaps it would be in order to give a little more of the background of the Woods report and the white paper. In 1965, Hon. Roger Teillet, the then Minister of Veterans Affairs, appointed a three-man committee to survey the work and organization of the Canadian Pension Commission under Mr. Justice Mervyn Woods as chairman. This committee conducted hearings in Toronto, Quebec City and Ottawa over a period of nearly three years, and reported in March, 1968. Subsequently, an interdepartmental committee was set up to study in depth the 148 recommendations.

When this committee concluded its exhaustive review, the minister conducted an extensive review in order to make his recommendations. These were considered by his cabinet colleagues and in September, 1969, a white paper was published setting forth a general policy standard of the government relating to veterans pensions. In his remarks today the hon. member for Fort William indicated that the Woods committee

report and the white paper were referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs which commenced its hearings back in September, 1969. The committee held 35 meetings and heard witnesses representing the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Canadian Pension Commission, the Veterans Bureau, the Royal Canadian Legion and 14 other national veterans organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might call it six o'clock.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until 8 p.m.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

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**AFTER RECESS**

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

**Mr. Weatherhead:** Mr. Speaker, in resuming the remarks I began before supper time, it now appears from the testimony of the witnesses that the government and the veterans organizations are in agreement on the substance of 103 of the Woods committee recommendations. There remain only 33 recommendations on which the government and the veterans organizations are not in complete agreement, 12 of which are under review by the government. However, even among the 33 recommendations on which full agreement has not been reached, the differences in some instances are about the best means of giving effect to an agreed principle.

I should now like to mention a few of the beneficial proposals of the white paper. The first is in respect of Hong Kong veterans. In view of the evidence now available, the government believes that the Hong Kong veterans deserve special consideration. As outlined in the White Paper, the government proposes to introduce legislation which will provide a minimum pension of 50 per cent for all Hong Kong veterans who apply for it and who have assessable degrees of disability. An important result of this legislation will be the full protection of dependants of Hong Kong veterans.

The second proposal is with respect to exceptional incapacity allowances. The government recognizes that many pensioners with 100 per cent disability suffer, because of the nature of their disability, extraordinary physical, social and psychological impairment for which there is no adequate compensation under the present pension system. In order to

[Mr. Weatherhead.]