

The Address—Mr. Green

amendment which was moved some weeks ago by the leader of the opposition, the following words:

Furthermore we regret that Your Excellency's advisers have failed to compensate the recipients of war veterans allowance for the increase in the cost of living by an appropriate increase in the amount of the allowance.

That subamendment is timely, and I hope that it will receive the earnest consideration of every member of the house. It is timely not only because of the great need of these men but also because today is the day after Remembrance day; we have a somewhat clearer vision today than we shall have in a few weeks' time, or than we had a few weeks ago, of the merit of the men who are eligible for this war veterans allowance.

These men are in a restricted category, for several reasons. In the first place they must have served in a theatre of war, unless they happen to be small pensioners. There are a few who were injured in England or even in Canada and who, as a result of injuries or of an illness, are in receipt of a pension. Those men also are eligible for the war veterans allowance but the main group of veterans who can qualify for the war veterans allowance are those who have served in a theatre of war; and that applies both to the first world war and the second. We are dealing with front-line troops. This question raises the needs of front-line troops, men who have had battle experience. There is also provision for the widows both of the front-line men and the pensioners who did not serve in a theatre of war.

The veteran must be of the age of sixty years or he must establish that he is incapable of self-maintenance. The widow of a veteran need be only fifty-five years of age. The greater number of these men are sixty years of age or over. That age was set because it was considered that front-line experience had pre-aged them to the extent of ten years. That is why the war veterans allowance is commonly known as the "burnt-out" pension. It is in effect an old age pension paid to the front-line veteran ten years in advance of the age at which payment is made to the civilian. But even when he becomes seventy years of age, and in some provinces can get larger payments under the Old Age Pensions Act, the veteran prefers to take the war veterans allowance. I am sure the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg), who was for some years minister of veterans affairs, will agree with that statement. These older veterans have always considered that they received the war veterans allowance as a matter of right, that it was something that they had earned.

They have a pride which arises from their front-line service. I was impressed

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yesterday, as I am sure the other hon. members of the house must have been, by the bearing of the older veterans—and by that of the younger veterans as well, of course—in the parade which took place out here in front of the parliament buildings. There was something in the way they carried themselves that showed clearly their attitude; showed their pride in what they have done for their country.

They are a responsibility of the dominion government. The provincial governments and the municipalities have never accepted responsibility for the veteran. They have always taken the position that he is the charge of the dominion government. I think that stand is perfectly proper. The dominion government must at all times recognize the fact that these men who served in the forces of the nation are the responsibility of the dominion government.

The war veterans allowance is based on a means test, as the old age pension was and will be until January 1, 1952. The allowance was supposed to be high enough to enable the veteran to live. It was never meant to be just a handout to help him along. It was supposed to be high enough to enable him to carry on. The figures at the present time are \$40.41 per month for a single veteran, which amounts to \$485 a year. Over and above that figure he is allowed to earn an additional \$125 without forfeiting any of his allowance. If he earns more than the additional \$125, then his war veterans allowance is cut accordingly. Hence at the present time the ceiling of the income of a single veteran receiving the war veterans allowance is \$610 per year. I am going to ask hon. members to keep that figure in their minds, because I intend to deal with it again later in my remarks.

For the married veteran the monthly allowance is \$70.83 which makes a yearly payment of \$850. In addition to that he can earn, or receive, for example, by way of a small disability pension, an additional \$250, making the total income he can get, and still receive the full allowance, the sum of \$1,100.

Those are the figures as of today: \$485 a year allowance for the single man, with total income of \$610; the sum of \$850 for the married veteran, with total income of \$1,100. They were set in the year 1948, a little over three years ago. As the cost of living has gone up there has been great suffering among these veterans and the widows of the veterans. It was not long after 1948 that many of us found it necessary to plead in this house for an increase in the amount of the allowance. Finally the government made an investigation, and discovered that we had been telling the truth about the position of the