

*Pension Act*

The Legion makes no unreasonable demands. It is continually on the alert to the legitimate needs of its membership. It remembers the dead by calling attention each November 11th to their sacrifices. It promotes an appreciation of the ideals and traditions inherent in our way of life and for which the dead laid down their lives. It strives daily to ensure better treatment and sympathetic understanding for veterans and dependents in need. In the Legion's activities the general public has a constant reminder of the just debt this country owes those of its ex-servicemen who are unable to fend for themselves. And that understanding on the part of all Canadians is essential to ensure that no ex-serviceman will in the future shuffle off the end of a pier in despair, while his fellow-citizens pay grateful homage on November 11th.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that all of us agree with the sentiments expressed in that editorial. In my opinion the writer has stated well the attitude of a great majority of Canadians towards the needs of the veterans of this country, and the necessity for sympathetic consideration from the government. While these organizations now find great satisfaction in the minister's announcement of the government's intention, I am sure there has been great rejoicing amongst the ladies' auxiliaries because they have taken a direct interest in the Legion's proposals concerning an increase in the basic rate of disability pensions and an increase in war veterans allowance. These thousands of splendid unsung women have worked loyally to support their men's proposals. I am sure that they will find great comfort in the knowledge that this legislation is coming before the house.

It interested me to know that the ladies' auxiliaries are particularly appreciative of the work of the opposition in this parliament in supporting the Legion's proposals and those of the National Council of Veterans. I have had indications of that on a good many occasions. It may interest you to know, Mr. Speaker, that the members of one branch of the ladies' auxiliary in my constituency were so pleased with the efforts of the opposition in this matter that all of them wrote me a personal letter addressed to the Right Hon. Herbert Wilfred Herridge. Possibly that is a trifle premature, but at least it was a kind gesture on their part. I recall receiving a letter from the wife of a pensioner who had apparently just completed listening to one of my broadcasts in the parliament hill series. They are of course always completely objective. She wrote me to this effect: Dear Mr. Herridge: I have just finished listening to your broadcast from parliament hill, and I hasten to put pen to paper. I want to tell you, sir, that whenever I hear your voice on the air I turn down the lights, sit in my easy chair and dream of an increase in the basic rate of disability pensions. Then, she spoke of the day when the opposition would

finally persuade the government to increase the basic rate of the disability pension, and she said: I am sure, sir, after listening to you, that the government will without doubt respond to your pleading.

I am exceedingly glad, Mr. Speaker, that the government has responded to the pleading of the veterans organizations and of Canadians who are interested in this question. This increase in the basic rate of pensions will give great relief to thousands of veterans who have been suffering severely from the increased cost of living. It will be a great thing for many on low pensions, with small incomes, who have been trying to earn a bit on the side in order to keep going, through doing odd jobs and various kinds of work. At this point I think I may be permitted to say that, in order to protect the small pensioner, so that the legislation will mean something to the small pensioner who at the present time is receiving a small pension and a portion of the war veterans allowance, the government should agree to having included in the bill when it comes before the house something to this effect: that no increase in disability pension be considered an increase of income for the purposes of the War Veterans Allowance Act. We in this group suggest that the government give serious consideration to that proposal.

As I have said before, when I am speaking in this house I see not only the resolution, the handsome Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Lapointe) and his intelligent and industrious parliamentary assistant, but I also see the people in the constituency this legislation benefits. I visualize a good number of people whom I know personally who will be affected by this legislation, including many older veterans, and widows. In addition to that, I have already had a good many personal letters which indicate what this resolution means to a large number of people whom I have the honour to represent. We in this group follow our usual policy of commending the government when it deserves commendation; we do not hesitate to do that, regardless at times of our sharp but constructive criticism of government policies. Having said that, however, I must say that while we in this group were pleased with the announcement which has been made, we do not think the government has given complete consideration to all those included under the terms of the Canadian Pension Act. I refer principally to three groups: first, the children of pensioners; second, the dependent parents; and third, the pensioners receiving a compassionate pension.