

Supply—Veterans Affairs

member with respect to the Veterans Land Act.

With respect to the 15 per cent increase in pensions and the issuing of the cheques may I say I appreciate very much getting these estimates through today. This will give the officials of the department an opportunity to get to work, although I believe the calculations have already been made. They can now put the operation into the works in order to get the cheques out by the end of this month. I cannot, of course, give an absolute guarantee because the final authority will not be given until such time as the supplementary estimates bill receives royal assent.

Mr. Knowles: If there is going to be any delay would the minister request that this item be taken out and be made a bill by itself? Then it could be given royal assent right away.

Mr. Teillet: That might be done, and I will be glad to consider it. I see no difficulty about that because once the house has approved I do not think there is much question as to what will happen in the other place. We are very anxious to get this out this month. Even though the March cheque might be only for the regular amount, at least we could get the adjustment cheque out at about the same time.

Hon. members showed much interest and asked a number of questions about the Woods committee report. I should explain the difficulty involved in the translation of it. It is a very extensive report comprising, I understand, some 1,600 pages. As has been mentioned, many technical terms are used when dealing with veterans affairs. In fact reference was made to our own Department of Veterans Affairs jargon. The manner of speaking of veterans when they are dealing with veterans benefits is sometimes extremely difficult to translate, and I have some responsibility for some of the delay in the issuing of the report because I have had the translation very carefully checked as it proceeded. I insisted on this being done in order to make sure that the two texts of the report would mean exactly the same thing.

Not too many hours ago I was informed that the chairman of the committee proposes to be in Ottawa about March 21 and hopes to be in a position to present the report at that time. I certainly hope he can meet that deadline. In view of the criticism that has been levelled at the delays, may I say that I in no way hold the members of the committee

[Mr. Teillet.]

responsible for those delays. Whatever criticism may be justifiably levelled, I accept it. I think they were very diligent in their work. They undertook a tremendous task and considering their enthusiasm and ability I believe that their report will have been well worth waiting for.

• (5:50 p.m.)

The hon. member for Comox-Alberni raised a number of questions concerning eligibility for the \$30 a month old age adjustment payment and not it being available to war veterans allowance recipients. The experience has been that administratively this becomes very awkward. This type of thing was done on two occasions in recent years when old age assistance was increased by \$10. Things became very difficult administratively. Finally we increased the ceiling of allowable income for war veterans allowance recipients in order to take that in. We also did so again just about the time when the \$30 a month supplement came into being. The ceiling was increased to \$145 a month for a single man and \$245 a month for a married man. While these amounts were needed, part of the reason for this procedure was not to get involved in administrative difficulties.

In the case of the cost of living supplement the amount is small enough that it would not cause difficulties but if it were multiplied four or five times over the years it would. It is anticipated that before this occurs another raise in the ceiling on allowable income for war veterans allowance recipients would be justifiable and there would be a need at that time for this to be absorbed again. If the hon. member would like to speak to some of the officials about this matter I believe the situation could be explained to him much better than I could do it here at this time. I am sure they would be pleased to talk to him.

You will recall that at the time the \$30 a month supplement was passed the war veterans allowance board wrote a letter to each war veterans allowance recipient asking that they make no decision before consulting the officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs. If they would follow that course, I believe they would find that the decision taken would be to their advantage. The officials of the department would advise the veteran to make the type of application that would be most beneficial to him. I might suggest that the same situation pertains in respect of the Veterans Land Act. I believe that if they went to the officials they would be given the kind of advice which would be most beneficial to them.