

*War Veterans Allowance Act*

an allowance under the War Veterans Allowance Act to those veterans of world war I who would qualify for an allowance except that they served in the United Kingdom less than 365 days prior to November 12, 1918. The allowance, however, would be less than a standard allowance as it would be calculated on the fraction of the number of days served in fact.

One of the requirements at the present time is that a veteran must have served in the United Kingdom for 365 days, and as many people know we have a number of veterans who just fall short of that required number of days service. In other words, if a veteran did serve in the United Kingdom 364 days out of the 365 he was not entitled to benefits under the War Veterans Allowance Act.

This bill is designed to eliminate what I consider a discrimination in our veterans legislation against certain member of the services who served in the army—and this applies only to the army—during world war I. Under the present terms of the War Veterans Allowance Act personnel of the army in world war I, as I said before, must have served 365 days outside of the territorial waters of North America, or in a so-called theatre of war such as France, Belgium, or, during world war I, in the Dardanelles, before they became eligible under the act. Travelling on the Atlantic ocean, for example, was not considered service in a theatre of war for a soldier during world war I. Naval personnel or seamen assigned to the same vessel, on the other hand, were considered for purposes of the act to be on active service and qualified for the benefits under the act by making only one voyage in dangerous waters. Herein I contend lies the discrimination between the various services. I say that the personnel of the army have been discriminated against in this case.

Bill No. C-37 is only a means by which I propose to bring once again this evident discrimination between our veterans before the members of this house. The bill itself proposes a sliding scale of eligibility of the veterans concerned. I would much prefer, as would other hon. members of this house, to see the deletion of that clause which refers to the 365 days service in our veterans allowance legislation.

I wish to cite as examples three cases, just to illustrate the point I am trying to make. In case No. 1 we will refer to a veteran by the name of Bill. He is a Canadian and was born in 1898. He volunteered in 1916 but was turned down on account of faulty vision, or

on account of his eyes. However, he was accepted in 1917 and sailed from Halifax in November, arriving in England on December 6, 1917. He served seven days a week in forestry battalions in the old country. He returned to Canada in 1919. His length of service was actually two years. His present health is very poor and he is unable to work. His eligibility under the War Veterans Allowance Act is nil.

In the second case I wish to cite we will call the veteran Jack and he was born in Scotland in 1900. He was called up by the British army in the last six months of the war and was sent to France where he was given the job of looking after a gasoline engine 40 miles behind the line. He was discharged from the British army in 1919. He migrated to Canada in the late 1920's and after 20 years in Canada he qualified and now receives the full war veterans allowance under our Canadian legislation.

The third case is Leo. Leo's case is much the same as Jack's except that Leo was born in Italy, but he migrated to Canada about the same time that Jack did. He also, having been an allied soldier in world war I through service in the Italian army, qualifies according to the act, and I say rightly so.

These three cases I have cited are not hypothetical at all, but are actual cases. Jack and Leo need not enter into the argument I intend to put forward. The fact is that Bill deserves full recognition as a Canadian volunteer. It was not his fault that he did not arrive in England prior to November 11, 1917. The fact is that he tried; he volunteered.

To a number of hon. members it may be a revelation or appear inconceivable that we still have today men, and some women too, in this country who served two or three years in the Canadian forces, and yet through certain quirks of the legislation enacted after world war I they are still without entitlement to war veterans allowances.

If time permitted it would be interesting to acquaint hon. members with what research reveals as the reason why such legislation was enacted by our predecessors which left many of our veterans without benefits under this act. In the early stages of world war I recruiting was done on a voluntary basis and remained on this basis during the years 1914, 1915, 1916 and part of 1917, I believe. A number of veterans of world war I travelled many miles at that time at their own expense to enlist in units that were recruiting. The situation was a little different at the time of world war II, but in those days they