

covered in the Woods report; there has to be legislation that deals with the War Veterans Allowance Act, and any other legislation that will give our veterans the breaks they deserve.

● (3:40 p.m.)

So, Mr. Speaker, I take my hat off to my friend, the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe, in that he put in his motion today one of the things we should be discussing now before the government brings down its legislation. Figures have been given and so on, and let me just remind hon. members of the House of the means test ceilings that are in the War Veterans Allowances Act; \$145 a month for a single veteran and \$245 a month for a married veteran. Those are the maximum total amounts of income they can have. Let me remind members that those who come under this are the ones who are, to use the vernacular, always getting it in the neck. In other pieces of legislation dealing with important pension improvements—I have in mind the guaranteed income supplement and the increase in pensions of retired civil servants—some people get increases without losing something they already had. When a recipient of the War Veterans Allowance Act qualifies for the guaranteed income supplement it comes off his war veterans allowance. There are retired public servants who qualified last spring for the increase that we put through in what was Bill C-194 last session, and Members of Parliament will remember Bill C-194. Yes, there are retired public servants who got that increase and then had it taken off their war veterans allowance. This is just not good enough and I do not think we should stand for it. The least we can do is raise the ceilings on the war veterans allowance.

I think we must also raise the amount that is paid under the War Veterans Allowance Act and we may have to do something about this sacred principle that you cannot do something for one unless you do it for another. I think we may have to make special legislation that says that when increases are provided, those getting the war veterans allowance shall not get it with one hand and have it taken away by the other. The people who suffer this kind of thing the most are those who come under the War Veterans Allowance Act.

I hope the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis), who has spoken of the good work we did on the veterans affairs committee, will not feel what I am saying is in criticism of the work of that committee, because it is not. That committee did not have this subject referred to it, so we could not discuss it. We tried to do so a few times but he listened long enough to be sure we were out of order and told us so.

Whether or not we had this before us in the committee, the matter is before us today quite properly in the motion made by the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe. It is before us in the context of the whole question of veterans affairs and this Parliament has to deal with it.

One of the reasons I am so glad this motion has been put down today, and we are having a discussion, is that

#### *Veterans Allowance Increases*

we are doing it before the minister brings in his legislation. Sometimes after the government has brought in its legislation and has said that is it, those speaking for the government do not like to make a change. Now, they can do this. I say to my friend the minister that he can go back to his department, or he can talk with his chief advisers who are up there in the gallery listening and watching us and say: Look, we better not cope with this problem after we have had a rough time on the floor of the House. Let us bring it in now. Let us say we were going to do it all along. That would be so wonderful we might even let the government get away with making that kind of statement.

Seriously, this is the area of greatest deficiency in what we are likely to get. We are almost certain to get in the general legislation a series of amendments to the Pension Act in relation to things we recommended in our report. I hope we get them all and perhaps one or two more but we are almost certain to get that. Whether we will get something adequate in respect of the basic rates under the Pension Act I do not know, but unless we also get in this session legislation to amend the War Veterans Allowance Act we will not have given our veterans in 1970 the fair treatment and justice to which I believe they are entitled.

So, Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that by special order made today I am permitted to talk for half an hour, there is no reason why I should do so. I am happy to draw my remarks to a conclusion and to indicate the amendment I should like to move to the motion which was presented by the hon. member from Newfoundland. I recognize that the way in which this motion has been put down it will not come to a vote tonight, but rather is a motion for discussion. Likewise I recognize that the amendment I move will therefore not come to a vote tonight. Usually, we like to have votes on the propositions we make but I think this is an indication of the above-party approach we take on veterans affairs. We state our propositions and we state them strongly, but we are not trying to divide the House. What we are trying to do is put into the minds of the government what ought to be done in the hope that it will be done under the legislation that is to be brought down.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the amendment I wish to move has to do with the date at which any increases under the Pension Act or under the War Veterans Allowance Act might be paid. I am suggesting in my amendment that all such increases should be paid retroactive to April 1, 1970, or to such earlier date as may be appropriate in certain cases. Those last words imply that there are some things in the recommendations which in themselves will call for an earlier date.

My strong and earnest suggestion in this amendment I hope is quite clear, namely that any of the increases at all must be made retroactive to April 1, 1970. Why did I pick that date? I could have picked a date way back when the Woods committee was set up, when it presented its report, when the white paper was drawn or when our committee made its report. There are dozens of dates one could pick. I picked that date because that is the date at which increases in pensions to retired civil servants,