

Supply—Veterans Affairs

raised or refute them if the information I have obtained about these directives is incorrect.

• (4:50 p.m.)

Mr. Groos: Mr. Chairman, I was very pleased that the last speaker, the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich, brought up the point about the position of the present members of the armed forces with respect to establishing their claims for loans under the Veterans Land Act without having received a firm notice that they are on their last posting. I would be very interested to hear the minister's reply on this point.

I want to bring out once again, even more forcibly than I brought it up before if that is possible, the matter of domiciliary care for veterans, particularly the older veterans. If I may refresh the memories of some hon. members on this point, may I point out that I am not talking about complete medical care but rather about care for older soldiers who do not require full hospital and medical care but do require some medical supervision and some place to go where there is someone to look after them.

I realize this is a provincial matter, but I do not think we can shrug off our federal responsibility with respect to these men and women, and shortly there will be an increasing number of women as those women who served in the armed forces in the second world war become in need of this type of care. We cannot shrug off our federal responsibility in this regard. These people have served their country in time of need, and I am quite positive that the country would hate to see them out on the streets, so to speak, with no one to look after them. Therefore I think it is up to the Department of Veterans Affairs to take up this challenge and deal with it.

However, I wish to go on record as saying that I realize how humane the Department of Veterans Affairs has been so far in their dealings with cases of this sort. I realize how they have bent the regulations as far as possible to provide the kind of assistance which these people need. But I think we have reached the point now where, with the provinces unable to cope with this situation and regardless of how many pensions we give, the total amount of money is not sufficient to provide an old veteran with the type of facilities he needs in his old age.

I would like to hear from the minister exactly what the government is prepared to do about this matter. I will not expect him to

[Mr. Chatterton.]

have the answers at his fingertips right now, but I wish to serve notice on him that the next time his estimates come before the house I will want to hear some firm government policy from his lips. The time has passed when we can afford to make do with the facilities provided up to now by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and if we are going to be honest about this we must realize that we will have to provide what is required in the absence of the necessary provisions being made by the provincial governments. I should like to reiterate that I realize how far the department officials have bent the regulations to meet the need, but more facilities must be provided for the ever-increasing need.

Mr. Herridge: Mr. Chairman, as usual I shall be quite brief. I do not intend to take the time of the house to deal with the administration of the department because that is being done very thoroughly by the members of the standing committee on veterans affairs. The officials in the various branches of the department come before the committee and explain to its members how the department operates in various provinces and various sections of Canada. However, I do wish to say that having been a member of the standing committee on veterans affairs since 1945 I know the officials of the department have set a standard of excellence in their human approach to the problems that veterans and their dependents face which could be copied to an even greater extent by some officials in other departments.

I rise at this time to say in particular that I am delighted that these estimates provide for \$7,800,000 to pay for the 15 per cent increase in disability pensions. This increase was welcomed by all the veterans organizations, which I understand wrote the minister on this account, and it was certainly welcomed by the veterans and their dependants. As a matter of fact, some veterans discussed this matter with me recently and told me how fortunate they thought it was that they got the 15 per cent increase before the economy moves were undertaken. At one time they were very worried. The increase applies as of January 1. It will take some time for these pensions to be recalculated and they will receive the 15 per cent increase for the first three months with their April cheques. I am very glad the house has agreed to go ahead with these estimates at this time to make this possible because I know a great deal of work is