

*War Veterans' Allowance Act*

a period of years by the veterans and we are quite prepared to support it.

The question of the extension of the benefits of the act to widows whose husbands died before completing 20 years' residence is one that has interested many of us a great deal in years gone by and we have proposed that there should be a change to bring more of these women into the group that would be eligible for receipt of the allowance. We are particularly pleased to see this change.

Early this year I made an inquiry of the ministry which appeared as question 2 on the order paper in which I asked how many widows of imperial war veterans had been residents in Canada for more than ten years but whose husbands predeceased them before they became eligible for the war veterans allowance as provided for under the War Veterans' Allowance Act. I was advised that an estimated 8,600 widows were in this position. I take it that at least those 8,600 widows will be in receipt of this addition. Before the wives of imperial war veterans organization were represented by the Canadian Legion they presented briefs on this question from time to time pointing out the desirability of making a change in the act.

The deletion of clause 8 will prove advantageous and desirable in so far as assistance to orphans is concerned.

Then there is the matter of the increase in the equity in the home from \$6,000 to \$8,000 at today's assessed values. It is true the legion asked first for \$9,000. Probably this is one of the points on which the government has not gone quite so far as we should like to see them go.

I listened to the hon. member for Kootenay West very closely when he spoke on widows allowances being extended. I certainly agree that there are instances such as he mentioned, which are unfortunate ones. I am pleased to see that a change has been made in the legislation in that respect.

There is the question that was dealt with by one of the Newfoundland members, namely the merchant navy, which gives me some concern. As I said earlier, I have been a member of special committees on veterans affairs for some years past but never during the time that I was a member did we ever have representations from the merchant navy in respect of this particular problem. If there is no other reason, that is reason enough to warrant the setting up of this committee and making it permanent so that we can call in witnesses, as the minister has told us would have to be done, in order to get their point of view to enable us to familiarize ourselves more particularly with the problems involved. I am told that the

[Mr. Hahn.]

merchant navy did make direct representation some years ago but no action was taken at that time and since then we have heard nothing from them. However, the fact that the question is raised in the Legion brief indicates that it is causing the Legion members some concern. I would say it is a problem that requires some consideration. The only way in which we can give it proper consideration is to go ahead with the job, set up the committee and give it the attention that it should have at that time. We can determine then what should be done to assist those people, if anything.

I have nothing further to say, Mr. Speaker, other than to repeat, as I indicated earlier, that we are very happy to see these progressive and forward steps being taken and I trust we shall continue to see the progression that will finally give the Legion members the type of legislation that they have the right to expect from this government.

(Translation):

**Mr. Lucien Cardin (Richelieu-Vercheres):** Mr. Speaker, I have no wish to delay consideration of this bill unduly, but, having had the privilege of sitting on the standing committee on veterans affairs, I believe I should congratulate the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Brooks) and his parliamentary assistant (Mr. Dinsdale) on their accession to the exalted position they now hold.

No one who heard the minister at the time he sat on the committee and who takes into account his statement in the house can deny that he has been giving close attention to veterans' problems. He was familiar with all details of the legislation applying to them and made a great many suggestions to the government of the day to improve the lot of veterans. We can therefore rightfully expect that the minister, now that he happens to be sitting on the opposite side of the house, will very shortly put into practice all the suggestions he put forward in the committee as well as in the house.

All veterans, those in my constituency, or elsewhere in the province of Quebec, or anywhere in Canada, will certainly be glad of the financial assistance provided by this bill. I must say, speaking as a veteran myself, that I will gladly vote for this legislation. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that the proposal now under review is, after all, only an amendment to existing legislation and that even before we were called upon to consider this particular bill, our veterans' legislation was considered to be among the most complete and adequate provisions of this