

matter I am raising, since he has received a great deal of correspondence about it. These forestry people claim they are being discriminated against under the present regulations in the sense they are not classified as bona fide veterans. In other words, although they fought, were injured and in some cases killed, they have not been classified as bona fide veterans of the second world war which they consider unfair. Has the government any plans to take action in line with the request that have been received from these people so that they may receive the accreditation and benefits that accrue to other bona fide veterans who fought during the second world war?

Mr. Dubé: Mr. Speaker, in many instances it is not up to my department to define who is and who is not a veteran. Often that decision is made by the Department of National Defence. I am unable to reply precisely to the question raised by my hon. friend. I will look into it and reply personally, if I may.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, this question has been raised year after year and I know that members on veterans affairs and defence committees have received much correspondence on the matter. May I, therefore, ask the minister to make a statement on motions in the house so that we may understand whether the government has plans to update its thinking on this matter. We want to know where these people stand and if they are or are not to be treated as second class Canadian citizens.

Mr. Dubé: As soon as a decision is made on this matter, it will be made known in the best possible way.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the minister a question which relates to those on the war veterans allowance. May we assume that the minister is co-operating with his colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro), in trying to persuade the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) to correct some of the income tax anomalies we have drawn to the government's attention from time to time. I refer in particular to the fact that veterans receiving war veterans allowances, who are persuaded to transfer in whole or in part to the guaranteed income supplement, end up with the same income but find that their income tax goes up. May we assume that the minister wishes to have this corrected?

Mr. Dubé: Yes, Mr. Speaker. That assumption is correct.

Suggested Pension Payment Corrections

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): That makes two of you.

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on this motion, may I say that I welcome the chance to speak on a subject which is undergoing intense examination at present and has occupied much of the energies of Canadians for the last 50 years. That is true, particularly, of the period since the end of the second world war. The fields of old age security and related matters have occupied much of the attention of the Canadian people. Our economists have been concerned about this matter. Although great strides have been made in taking care of our senior citizens and others needing assistance from the state, unfortunately, no sooner are programs of pension adjustment introduced than new needs seem to arise. Although pensions and benefits under various programs have risen fairly rapidly, the rapid rate of inflationary increase has meant that those who have no resources other than their government pension have been living at minimum levels of subsistence. Many people, therefore, have been living in circumstances that Canadian citizens would like to see improved.

In this era of affluence we hear, in this country that has great natural resources and an intelligent and reasonably well educated, mobile working force, that generates much of its capital and attracts much capital from the western world, especially from the United States, that we should do more for our citizens who live in poverty and in circumstances we all wish to see improved.

There is considerable discussion at the present time about our welfare programs. It has also been said that our welfare structure is a jungle, that it is inefficient and that it could easily be replaced by some sort of overall approach aiming at a guaranteed minimum income or negative income tax. This sounds very easy in practice but I wonder, if we introduced something like that, whether we should not wind up with as many inequities as we now have, or more.

I believe that in providing for certain income standards for some of our people who are supported by the public purse we, as Canadians, have tended to equate the mere granting of money with a certain standard of living. It has not been appreciated that the important thing is, what will the money our people are granted buy in the market place? It is not important really whether a man's income is \$100 a month or any other sum.