

Old Age and Veterans' Pensions

war veterans allowances. The ceiling today is \$245 per month for the married veteran and \$145 a month for the single veteran. The last adjustments in these figures were made some time ago. If a man has no other means of income and is not yet eligible for an old age pension, that means he is forced to get by today on \$2,940 per year if he is married and \$1,690 per year if he is single. That is barely more than \$30 a week, Mr. Speaker, for a single man; and while that is the income recommended by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson), it is not at all a just or adequate income for a Canadian citizen, whether he is a veteran or not.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bell: Thirty buck a month Benson.

Mr. Stanfield: I suspect that the answer will be that the government has the matter under review. Sometimes I expect that will always be the answer; and the review will never end and will never produce results for the Canadian veterans. It is at this point in the debate that I wish to refer briefly to the growing disenchantment in this government among Canadian veterans. In addition, there is a growing lack of confidence in the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé) on the part of Canadian veterans.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: Canadian veterans just cannot understand why it has taken this government so long to make some simple long-overdue adjustments in what they are receiving. They are concerned that the minister has taken the same attitude towards veterans that ministers in this government from western Canada have taken towards the west—that is, that he sees his purpose as protecting the government against the veterans. That, surely, is not at all an adequate attitude.

This seems to be a government of technocrats and public relations men. The technocrats believe it is enough for a government to be efficient and the public relations men settle for less than that. They think it is enough to seem to be efficient. I have spoken before about the false image of efficiency and the deliberate campaign of this government to eliminate or restrict critics who might point out how inefficient the government really is in fact.

I want to deal briefly with another new, basic ideology, the ideology of efficiency which allows the government to regard and describe half a million unemployed as "re-

[Mr. Stanfield.]

grettable side effects". This government has a computer for a conscience. As it turns out, the computer usually cannot count. But at least it cannot be said that the mistakes of this government are human mistakes. There is a machine on which to put the blame, and probably that is appropriate.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: I know this attacks the basic faith of the technocrats in the East Block, but the government in a civilized country has a larger responsibility than just to be efficient. It must do more than make the trains run on time.

This government, in the false name of efficiency, has consistently set itself against the weak and the dispossessed. It is not clear whether their guiding philosophy is that the poor deserve to be poor or else they would be cabinet ministers, or whether it is that someone always has to sacrifice and suffer when a new approach is being introduced. If the new theology of efficiency is going to claim some victims, it might as well be the poor and the dispossessed.

An hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. Stanfield: It is better, sir, that someone strong enough should complain and get in the way of "progress". I repeat, this government has taken a consistent, hard line against Canadians in need. Earlier this year I proposed that the government immediately take off the tax rolls those Canadians who were paying income tax and living below the poverty line. But the government refused. The Economic Council of Canada has indicated that one Canadian in five is living below the poverty line in this rich country. The government could act. It has refused to do so thus far, offering as an excuse that it has another policy review in progress.

Inflation, which the government claims to be fighting by creating these 542,000 "regrettable side effects", is still like a thief, stealing every day from Canadians on fixed incomes. Some Canadians with comfortable incomes might be in a position to hold the line on incomes and join the fight against inflation. But when you live in hardship, when inflation cuts into your ability to buy basic necessities, you should not be asked to stand in the front line of the fight. You are in it already and the government has no moral right to load on a greater burden. As I said before, the government can claim it is being tough; it can claim