

War Veterans' Allowance Act

that thinking does not prevail, because I do not think it is in accordance with the wishes of the people of Canada. They have elected the hon. members and while they are in office and carrying out their promises—in the light of the statement on the throne speech debate made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. St. Laurent) I agree with the hon. member there would be no excuse in the world for calling an election before some of these things are done—I take it from what he said—

Mr. Cardiff: Don't worry about it.

Mr. Tucker: I need to worry about it because I am here speaking on behalf of the veterans and I must take seriously the statement of your own leader.

Mr. Maloney: He is a veteran.

Mr. Tucker: My hon. friend is suggesting that I should pay no attention to the statement of the Prime Minister?

Mr. Cardiff: I did not say that; I said not to worry about it.

Mr. Tucker: He said I should not worry about it.

Mr. Cardiff: You are not worrying about that; you are worrying about the calling of an election.

Mr. Tucker: My hon. friend is suggesting I do not worry. I think my work in this house on behalf of the veterans will bear examination. I have done my best, Mr. Speaker. What I am saying is this. I have every faith in what the Minister of Veterans Affairs said. I believe he has hopes of bringing in a bill dealing with all these veterans matters and referring it to a veterans committee at the next session which I presume will be held after Christmas. At that time all of these things could be gone into. If one were absolutely sure that that is going to happen, the situation would be different. I am not suggesting that the minister does not expect it to happen but I must say that when the minister said what he did—and I hope he will forgive me for saying this—there is more reason for the veterans and the country now to expect that there will be no dissolution unless it is forced on the government, until the Prime Minister's promises are carried out.

The next question that I said I would come back to—I do not want to take too long on it—is the question of the over-all maximum annual income which is allowed to the single veteran. As was pointed out by the minister, that maximum over-all annual income allowed to an unmarried veteran, without a child, or not residing with a child, has been raised from \$960 to \$1,080. The bill proposes

[Mr. Tucker.]

to raise it that much. What does that mean, Mr. Speaker? It means this. We will take a veteran who is over 70 and whose wife is over 70. Many of them are in that position. They will draw between them in old age security the amount of \$1,320.

I started speaking about the single veteran and will deal with his position first. The single veteran will draw old age security in the sum of \$660 and under this legislation he is entitled to draw \$70 a month, which makes \$840. Now that would give him an income of \$1,500; but the difficulty is that the over-all limit placed in this bill is only \$1,080. In other words, by putting this over-all limit in the bill at \$1,080, it means that the recipient over 70 on old age security cannot draw in war veterans allowance a matter of \$420 of the amount provided by this parliament. That has been criticized by the members opposite from time to time. For example, I would refer to the remarks of the Prime Minister, when he was in opposition, about the right of a person in receipt of old age security to get that and the war veterans allowance in full.

The Prime Minister, when he was in the opposition, spoke about this in this house on July 12, 1956, and I find it hard to understand how a government newly elected should ignore the words spoken in this house by their own Prime Minister before the election. Here is what he said; as reported at page 5897 of *Hansard*:

I should now like to say a word or two with reference to a matter that has been discussed on previous occasions, namely, war veterans allowances. As the situation is at the present time, the ceiling on income for single veterans is \$840 and for married veterans \$1,440.

This is the present Prime Minister, then one of the spokesmen for the opposition, speaking:

I find it hard to understand why the amount should not be increased to the level of that amount which, under the Income Tax Act, becomes exempt from income taxation. This question has been asked the minister before: where is the sense of fairness in this situation? Everyone is entitled to the old age pension, whether it is the Prime Minister who receives it or somebody else. Every citizen in our country is entitled to it at 70 years of age. Why should those in receipt of war veterans allowance find the amount of their old age pensions in effect reduced on the achievement of the age of 70 years? That is something that one hears universally complained about. It is something that is unjust for, by reason of the present ceilings, it places those who served and their dependents in a second-class position with respect to others who did not serve. It brings about a state of affairs that is unfair and unjust and it constitutes a discrimination that cannot be justified.

He went on to say:

I ask the minister once more—as he has been asked on previous occasions—this question: why should such a state of affairs be permitted to continue?