

*Motions for Papers*

benefit of veterans. I do so for many reasons. As I said a short while ago, I have a very legitimate pride, because I have the privilege of chairing the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and also because, like you, Mr. Speaker, I have a certain feeling of solidarity towards my former buddies in the air force and those in the army and the navy as well.

And in a short period of time, Mr. Speaker, measures have been announced and implemented precisely so that our companions who fought with us and many of whom came back physically disabled be treated with a little more fairness and honesty.

[English]

I would like to deal first with disability pensions. Less than two and a half years ago the Pension Act was the subject of a comprehensive overhaul. The major improvements legislated at the time included the creation of the exceptional incapacity allowance, the clarification of the benefit of doubt clause, the introduction of special consideration for Hong Kong veterans, the establishment of a totally independent bureau of pension advocates, and the creation of the Pension Review Board. This landmark legislation which became law on March 30, 1971, resulted in increased benefits for veterans and their dependents and also opened the door to many thousands of others to apply for pension or to renew a previous application which had been rejected.

All hon. members will be aware of what has happened as a result of this opening up of the Pension Act. Many thousands of applications have been received and the Canadian Pension Commission has had to be expanded substantially in order to cope with the resulting avalanche of claims. I am happy to report that the backlog of applications, although still very substantial, has now started to diminish.

Although it is less than two and a half years since these major amendments were made to the Pension Act, it is noteworthy that the act has been further amended three times and that rates have been increased on four occasions. On April 1, 1971, basic rates were raised by 10 per cent. On January 1, 1972, and again on January 1, 1973, pension rates were escalated in accordance with a cost of living formula in order to maintain the purchasing power of the pensioner's income. Most recently, Bill C-202 was enacted on June 28, 1973, and this was truly a red-letter day in the history of Canadian pension legislation since the basic rate structure is now tied to the composite of five unskilled categories of public servants.

This change followed the recommendations of a joint committee of officials of the department, the Canadian Pension Commission and representatives of veterans' organizations and resulted in an average increase in basic pension rates of 24 per cent. It is estimated that the full year cost of this increase alone will exceed \$50 million. No provision was made in the main estimates for this increase in pension rates for obvious reasons and, as a result, appropriate inclusion will be made in supplementary estimates to finance these increases.

The situation with reference to war veterans allowances has been equally dynamic and since April 1, 1971, the rate structure has been increased on four occasions, the most recent being April 1, 1973, when rate increases of \$20.14 per month for the single recipient and \$39.60 per month for the

married recipient were granted. At the moment, the actual income ceiling for a single recipient is \$2,293.68 and for a married recipient \$3,926.52.

● (1730)

In addition, recipients age 65 and over also benefit from the regulation which exempts \$15 per month, if single, and \$30 per month, if married, of their old age security and guaranteed income supplement payments. Over and above these income values, recipients may now earn up to \$1,000 per annum, if single, or \$1,500 per annum, if married, without affecting their war veterans allowance payments.

There were other significant changes and Bill C-148 is one of them. They became effective on April 1, 1973, with the result that war veterans allowance has been changed from a means tested program to a modified income tested program. For example, the former limits on savings and personal property have been removed and the recipient will now be able to own his own home, regardless of value, without his allowance being affected. In addition, war veterans allowances, like disability pensions and old age security, will be automatically increased in accordance with changes in the consumer price index.

Although veterans affairs is considered a mature department with well defined and well established programs, I have attempted in my remarks to illustrate the rate and extent of change which has been occurring in the recent past. In many instances, these changes could be foreseen only in very general terms and I have indicated the extent to which supplementary financing will be required in the current fiscal year.

My remarks are not intended in any way to suggest that every effort should not be made to plan as carefully as possible, but merely to indicate how the best of plans are subject to unforeseen change or to timing which cannot be accurately predicted.

I have dealt with only two programs of the department, namely, pensions and war veterans allowances, since these have been the two most dynamic in recent times. In closing, I would like to mention briefly a study which is currently being made by treatment services on the long term effects of imprisonment on former prisoners of war in the European theatres of operations. This study, which is being made by Dr. J. Douglas Herman of Ottawa, is an attempt to determine if the hardships of incarceration in prison camps produced any identifiable or delayed action disabilities on those who were unfortunate enough to have been prisoners of war. What this study will reveal and where it will lead is, of course, not known at this time and I mention it merely to illustrate the type of research which conceivably could give rise to further changes in any one of several departmental programs.

I would like to speak at greater length on the programs for which the minister is responsible, but since I do not wish to encroach upon the time available to other speakers, I will terminate my remarks at this point.

**Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe):** Mr. Speaker, the motion we are dealing with asks for a complete copy, including budgets, of the program forecast of the Department of Veterans Affairs for the latest year for which Parliament approved departmental expendi-