

*The Address—Mr. Diefenbaker*

**Mr. Sinnott:** The hon. member has been told by the Chair that he has exceeded his time. He has not had unanimous consent, yet he continues to talk.

**Mr. Coldwell:** He has finished.

**Mr. Noseworthy:** The hon. member is doing the talking now. I have finished.

**Mr. J. G. Diefenbaker (Lake Centre):** I shall not follow my hon. friend's example by any recital of unemployment. He has placed the facts before the house, and they deserve serious consideration. They certainly require an answer from the government. I rise, however, to deal first with the subamendment moved by the hon. member for Acadia (Mr. Quelch). I intend as well to bring before the house certain matters peculiarly affecting western agriculture at this time. The subamendment before the house reads:

... we regret that Your Excellency's advisers have failed to compensate the recipients of war veterans allowance for the increase in the cost of living by an appropriate increase in the amount of the allowance.

In my opinion that is a subamendment which deserves the serious attention of every hon. member in this house, representing as it does a demand on the part of many thousands of ex-servicemen and women who today are receiving a war veterans allowance that is insufficient. I cannot understand, Mr. Speaker, why there should be any question or any delay regarding this matter. There was infinite delay in the consideration of the general problem of war veterans pensions. I say this, and I think it is a fair statement; that if the hon. members of this house had been given the opportunity at any time during the past two years of voting on the question of whether or not war veterans pensions should be increased, there would have been a vote in favour of it. But the government did not want that done, and there was no vote on that subject. I venture the opinion that if any minister of the crown—and there are two of them in the house now, the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Fournier) and the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin)—were to give the hon. members who support them the opportunity of a free vote on this amendment, it would be carried almost unanimously.

**Mr. Martin:** There is nothing but freedom in the ranks of the government members.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** If there be freedom, and one must accept the word of the minister, then it is passing strange to me that hon. members representing other parties than the opposition have not had requests from war veterans for an increase in this allowance. At the last session a veterans committee was

set up, and it met for a considerable period of time. In that committee in May, 1951, the hon. member for Royal (Mr. Brooks) moved an amendment to the effect that the committee be given instructions to consider the basic rates of pension and the War Veterans Allowance Act, and make recommendations in reference thereto. There was a demand, therefore, last session on the part of the war veterans everywhere for an increase in this allowance, yet when the motion was made it was defeated, entirely on party lines. Every government member on that committee voted against consideration being given to the War Veterans Allowance Act, with the exception of the hon. member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Cruickshank). Ever since that time the veterans all over this country have been asking why consideration of this subject has been delayed. Many of them have been denied pensions and are unable to carry on; yet when the subject of war veterans pensions in general is being considered at this session parliament is denied, by reason of the stranglehold by the government on the control of business within parliament and government expenditures, the opportunity of giving to these veterans the money they need today because of the increased cost of living. Why the delay? Another committee is to be set up at the next session. Why not do something at this session?

Do we need a committee of parliament to ascertain whether or not a single veteran who is unable to work can live on \$40.41 a month? Do we need a committee to take evidence on that question? Do we need a committee to take evidence on the question of whether or not a married veteran who is unable to work can live on \$70.83 a month? Do we need a committee of parliament to ascertain whether or not a single war veteran needs permissive earnings greater than \$610 a year or a married veteran needs permissive earnings greater than \$1,100 a year? Compared with the number who receive pensions, there are many, many more in the position that, by reason of their service, they are unable to carry on, although they are unable to prove that they are entitled to a pension.

I cannot understand why a matter such as this should be postponed to another session. Many of these veterans who are unable to secure even small pensions will find themselves facing destitution during the coming winter. If the Minister of National Health and Welfare who spoke a moment ago of freedom would recognize this plea and say that no party considerations will enter the vote on this question, but that the government will give that freedom which the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) gave on