

Veterans Affairs

the place our new offices were going to be in Hull. I still cannot swim, so I could not hold the meeting over there.

I believe the government has stated how important this committee on veterans affairs is. If I recall correctly, last year we spent \$228 million in the Department of Veterans Affairs. I am looking at it from the straight financial point of view, and \$228 million is a lot of money. I do not know of any committee that should be more important than the veterans affairs committee. If we owe a debt to anybody, we owe it to the veterans of this country and their dependents. We have had excellent committees ever since I have been here. I have had the privilege of sitting on them. On the whole we have got on very well together as members representing all parties. I have never been able to see eye to eye at all times with the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra (Mr. Green). But on the other hand, any man who could see eye to eye with him on all matters should not be here. He should be in a position which is a long way upward. But the veterans themselves have asked for this committee. All the veterans' organizations have asked for it because they and I think it is in the best interests of the veterans themselves.

We had an excellent committee, Mr. Speaker, which had more to do than anything else in this house with bringing in that excellent old age pension legislation we now have. That committee studied the matter continuously. I believe we should have had a committee this year on health insurance. Whether that view is right or wrong, that is my opinion.

We have a large number of veterans in the Dominion of Canada. I am not going to say here and now whether or not they have been properly treated. That is not the point as I see it. For the benefit of the hon. member for Melfort (Mr. Wright), I may say that I am not reading my speech. In the interests of the veterans throughout the country and, as a matter of fact, in the interests of the economy of Canada as a whole, we should have a permanent committee. Obviously as the years go by we shall have to review the plight of the veterans and their dependents from a different angle from year to year. We brought down an excellent veterans' charter, but that charter should be kept up to date. In order to keep it up to date we shall have to look at conditions as they change. We have had inflation to a certain extent. We therefore have to view the financial remuneration to these veterans and their dependents in the light of world conditions of the day.

[Mr. Cruickshank.]

I am not trying to talk this resolution out. Probably I am in the unfortunate position that I am not able to vote for a few days because of my pair. I believe that the people of Canada, including the majority of the members of this house if they look at this matter from a free point of view, would like to see this committee set up. As I have already said, Mr. Speaker, when we have set up a committee that sits once in ten years and another that sits about once in three or four years, whose members do nothing but look at one another and sympathize with one another over the poor food we get in the cafeteria, surely we should have a permanent committee to consider the affairs of our veterans. I am entirely in favour of it. The veterans of my riding, through their Legion, are entirely in favour of this committee. I also believe that the people in my riding are in favour of having this permanent committee set up at this session of parliament.

Mr. A. J. Brooks (Royal): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member who has just taken his seat, I do not wish to talk this resolution out because I think it is an extremely important one. It is one that has been before the house on many occasions. The house well knows my views on this subject. On a good many occasions I have recommended a permanent veterans committee of the house. As I think the hon. member who has just taken his seat stated, the veterans of this country look upon the veterans committee as their forum.

Since the first veterans committee was set up many years ago—I am not sure of the date but I think it was in 1916—we have had a great many veterans committees. We have had one practically every second session. As far as veterans are concerned, the situation keeps changing from year to year. When the veterans' charter was put through here in the house a few years ago—and at that time the members who sat on that committee worked for many weeks—we thought we had evolved a fairly perfect charter for the veterans. But since then there have been a great many changes; and year after year, as conditions change in this country, the veterans' situation changes. I am sure it is obvious to all of us that, with these changes, it is necessary that the veterans committee of the House of Commons should be permanent.

When I was speaking on this matter on a previous occasion I think I pointed out that there are in the House of Commons a number of permanent committees which never sit at all. They never have any business to come before them. A veterans committee,