

missions from veterans organizations from across the land, including studying various recommendations, proposals and counter proposals over a period of several months, I am very happy and proud that the results contained in the bill under discussion are, by and large, considered to be very satisfactory by all concerned.

The editorial in the most recent issue of the national magazine of the Royal Canadian Legion, mentioned by the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher), expresses genuine satisfaction with the bill. With your permission, Sir, I wish to read part of it. The headline reads, "A New Deal for Veterans." The text reads as follows:

Another milestone on the long road toward obtaining war pension legislation improvements was passed last month with the introduction of Bill C-203 in the House of Commons by the Hon. J.-E. Dubé, Minister of Veterans Affairs.

The scope of the legislative changes in the Pension Act—the most extensive in half a century—reflect the sincere concern of the minister and the government for the welfare of those who, when they were needed, placed their lives at the disposal of their country and for whom Canada has a special obligation.

● (8:40 p.m.)

It is a source of deep satisfaction to the Legion and other nationally chartered veterans organizations that the proposed changes in the Pension Act meet most of the requirements that were set out in the Woods report, and subsequently supported by the parliamentary committee on veterans affairs.

The improvements in the bill, such as the pension review board and the extra allowances for multiple disabilities, have clearly indicated that the minister meant what he said when he gave assurance in the House some months ago that the government's views in the white paper were not "rigid or immutable" and that the recommendations of the veterans affairs committee, which supported many of the proposals by veterans' organizations, would be given "full and sincere consideration."

Other important changes, such as the special pension status to former prisoners of war of the Japanese, the establishment of the veterans bureau as a separate entity with a closer relationship with pension claimants, the broadening of the "benefit of the doubt" clause, the new appeal procedures, and the more humane approach to the whole system of awards, should go far to remove many of the wrongs that have irritated disability pensioners for many, many years.

The sincerity of the government in dealing with this legislation is best illustrated by the appointment of Mr. Donald Thompson as chairman of the War Veterans Allowance Board, who served for 11 years as Dominion secretary of the Royal Canadian Legion, one of the most active, untiring and dedicated persons to the welfare of war veterans that I know. I am sure that this appointment will please war veterans from coast to coast. I should like to extend to him my personal congratulations. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I hope you will agree that the Minister of Veterans Affairs, who made this appointment, should share in the general congratulations which this move will surely generate.

Every one of us, especially those connected with veterans affairs, knows the minister well, appreciates the fact that he accepted the responsibilities of his office with dedication and humility and firmly resolved to do for our veterans what no other minister dared to do for them in the past. The minister insisted on introducing legislation for the welfare of veterans, legislation second to none in the world, with modern concepts of social justice and of

obligation to those who in war and peace have placed their lives at the service of their country.

Pension Acts

I should also like to congratulate the chairman of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis), who presided over no less than 39 meetings with infinite tact and consideration, to say nothing of the patience which he demonstrated during some especially complicated and long discussions. On the other hand, members were really interested in advancing the best possible methods of dealing with intricate questions.

By introducing this legislation the nation has recognized a debt to the disabled veterans, the crippled and the blind. Mr. Speaker, as the years go by it is regrettable to observe that as November 11 rolls around, fewer and fewer people are formally observing Remembrance Day. But while public response may have paled, the significance of November 11 remains unchanged. The courage and valour of those who fought in the wars for freedom and suffered wounds and loss of limbs, are branded on the pages of history. Mr. Speaker, their contributions are without equal, and by approving this legislation we will merely be expressing our thanks for their blood and their courage.

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I am especially pleased to have an opportunity to speak briefly in this debate. It is a well known fact that in times of national emergency we call on our young men to defend our country against aggression. In times like that we appreciate, perhaps more than we do in ordinary times, the value of the freedoms we all cherish, and we conclude that we are morally justified in asking our young men to volunteer for the defence of their country, as many living Canadians have done on two or more occasions.

When these crises pass, a grateful nation feels that it owes a debt of gratitude to those who have defended it against aggression, and it is well for us to recall that on at least two occasions we in Canada, in common with most of the western world, came within a hair's breadth of losing the freedoms that we cherish so highly. We escaped that fate by the skin of our teeth. In such a situation there was a common feeling among the citizens of Canada that the nation had a high moral obligation to those who had served in the armed forces in time of war. One way they felt this moral obligation could be discharged was to compensate as much as possible veterans whose health was damaged because of war service, or who were disabled because of wounds and therefore to some degree were incapacitated with respect to earning a livelihood. It was felt that veterans who had disabilities should be compensated at least by an amount equal to the wage of an unskilled labourer. That was the attempt, originally, and in 1920, at the end of World War I, the amount provided under the Pension Act was \$900 a year, equivalent to that paid to a cleaner or a helper in the federal civil service.

But as time passed, with the depreciation in the value of money and the increase in the cost of living, veterans