

Old Age and Veterans' Pensions

fall under the broad heading of social legislation, but are more akin to workmen's compensation. There is no means test involved; there is no needs test involved. Disability pensions are awarded to veterans who are entitled as of right, and are based on degree of disability and not on other earnings.

While on the subject of pension rates, may I say that substantial increases have been implemented during the last six years. For instance, in 1964 there was a 10 per cent increase, in 1966 a 15 per cent increase, and in 1968 a further increase of 15 per cent. In other words, over the last six years we have had increases amounting to more than 45 per cent on a compounded basis, and I am confident that this government will continue to meet its obligation in this area in an even more co-ordinated, thorough and effective way.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre may try to take advantage of allotted days if he wishes, but this government is taking advantage of planning, co-ordination and progressive thinking to provide the very best in all its social programs.

I have spoken about pensions and I should like to comment briefly on war veterans allowances. The War Veterans Allowance Act came into force in 1930 and has been referred to by legislators and veterans organizations as "the burned-out pension". It was so-called because the studies which led to its being came to the conclusion that returned servicemen of World War I were pre-aged by reason of the hardships of wartime service. A means of maintaining the veteran who had no disability pension or a small pension and who was unable to provide for himself in the employment field, was provided through the act.

● (5:50 p.m.)

Over the years the act has been changed many times and the results have been the liberalization of the legislation. At the present time the act provides for an allowance to be paid to any male veteran, most commonly a Canadian veteran of World War I or World War II who served in a theatre of war or who is in receipt of a disability pension. In addition, that veteran must have attained the age of 60 years and be permanently unemployable because of physical or mental disability, and so on. The allowance may be paid at age 55 to a female veteran or to the widow of a veteran with the disability clause applying at a lower age. The payment of the allowance is subject

to a means test. At the present time there are 82,000 recipients of the allowance, about 35 per cent of whom are widows. The cost of the allowances over the past year has been about \$92 million.

In 1962, part XI of the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act was approved by Parliament to provide benefits, similar to those provided to veterans under the War Veterans Allowance Act, to certain groups of civilians who performed meritorious service during World War I or World War II and to their widows and orphans. There are 2,200 recipients under this legislation, and they receive allowances totalling about \$3 million.

In addition to the war veterans allowance there is also the assistance fund regulations which provide for the payment of supplementary awards to the recipients of war veterans allowance and civilian war allowances by way of continuing monthly supplements when the recipient's income is insufficient to meet the basic monthly cost of shelter, fuel, food, clothing, personal care and specific needs of dependants or single payments to meet emergencies, or when it is considered that such alternative form of assistance would best meet the established needs of the recipient. There are some 17,400 recipients who were assisted by these supplemental moneys during the last fiscal year, involving a total expenditure of about \$7.3 million.

Recipients of war veterans allowance and civilian war allowances are provided with free medical and hospitalization coverage in Canada. This care may be provided in a departmental hospital or a contract hospital under the veterans treatment regulations. With the commencement of the provincial hospital insurance programs, financed through premium payments and/or taxes combined with cost-sharing arrangements made through federal-provincial agreement, it was realized that recipients would often prefer to be hospitalized in hospitals as close to their homes as possible. Provision was therefore made to pay the appropriate premiums on behalf of the veteran and civilian recipient. The cost of these premium payments in the last fiscal year amounted to about \$1,146,000. By these means veteran and civilian recipients receive full hospital and medical coverage either in a DVA hospital or through the hospital or doctor of their own choice.

Not only has this government undertaken to review pension rates and allowances; it has quickly moved ahead in another area of tremendous benefit to veterans—the white paper