

The Address—Mr. Hansell

increases in war veterans allowances. We all know that today there are veterans who, as far as their financial status is concerned, are perhaps in a worse plight than many war veterans on pensions. There are older veterans, widows and perhaps mothers and dependents who have no way in the world of making a living, and yet no thought was given to them. It is all very well for the government to say that a special committee is to be set up next session to look into this matter, to discover whether or not rates under the war veterans allowance are to remain the same or how much they should be increased. To me that is a very lame excuse, because all the government needs to do is to apply the same logic, the same reasoning and the same actuarial studies to the war veterans allowance as they did to the increase in pensions. Unquestionably they increased the war veterans pensions because of the higher cost of living. Well, the higher cost of living applies equally to those who are in receipt of war veterans allowances as to pensioners. What I am saying is that we are very sadly disappointed that these increases have not been announced, and that there will be no increase in the war veterans allowances until some time next year and perhaps late in the year. I say that because we all know that committee work takes time. Perhaps the next session will not be called until next February and the committee will not be set up until the end of that month and it may take a couple of months after that to report. That is the situation. However, I am very pleased that the hon. member for Acadia put the motion as he did, because it will give no hon. member in the house any excuse, when the vote comes, for not laying right on the line what his attitude is in respect to this matter.

I was very interested the other day in the line of debate pursued by the hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker). The hon. member was talking on this particular amendment and showing how each and every hon. member would now be in a position to register his vote, one way or the other. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) objected as follows, as appears at page 1244 of *Hansard*:

Does my hon. friend suggest that when any member of this house comes to register his vote, he does not use that privilege in accordance with his best judgment in the circumstances?

Of course that is a trick question. We all know that, from experience of the past in this house. Some of us have been sitting here a long time. We all know from past experience in the house that it is one thing to say something out on the hustings, but it is another thing to do something about it in this house when it comes to registering your vote. We all

know what happens. I shall now finish the quotation from *Hansard*. When the Minister of National Health and Welfare interjected that question the hon. member for Lake Centre went on:

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to become involved in any argument such as that. I am asking the question of the minister again, and giving him the opportunity to answer. Will he, speaking for the government, say that a free vote will be given on this amendment? That is the question.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare has never answered that question from that day to this. Let me pursue the matter a little further. We all know that just preceding the present session a circular letter was sent out from the Legion headquarters to all their organizations throughout the country, asking them to get in touch with their members and put before them the case for increased pensions and increased war veterans allowances. They came to me. I spoke before the local organizations of the Legion, and I suppose other hon. members did. What did members of this house tell these local bodies comprising the Legions throughout this country? What did the members tell them? Well, I know what they told them; but it does not take half an eye or half a brain to discern what they were told—"Well, of course, we will do all we can for the pensioners; of course we will do all we can for those who are on war veterans allowances; of course we will." Yet, it is one thing to tell them something in your own home town or in your own constituency, when they come to you. But, Mr. Speaker, we are here and now given an opportunity that will take us much further than vain words, vain speeches—**vain words, words, words!**

Now comes the opportunity for each and every member in the house to say whether they stand behind our veterans in respect of war veterans allowances, or whether their loyalty is to their political party, first. That is the issue, and it will be the issue in this vote. There is no getting away from that.

There is one other point I should like to discuss. When anyone raises a fuss along these lines, when one suggests that some hon. members are more concerned about keeping the government in office than in expressing and pursuing vigorously the wishes of their people, some government member rises in his place and says, "Well, under our parliamentary system we have a system of responsible government."

I remember that happened a year or two ago when, speaking about our parliamentary system, I compared it with the American system, as well as one or two others. When I was urging that some changes be made so as to bring into existence a more effective