

reluctance of such amputees to wear the often crude appliances is quite legitimate.

Another factor giving concern is the departure from a long-accepted principle of our pension administration, which compensates all amputees for their anatomical loss, based on the location of the amputation.

I think perhaps that is enough to make the point, and I earnestly ask the minister to give very serious consideration to including this proposal among any other amendments that he may make.

The other portion of the legislation which I feel perhaps the minister may be interested in amending is about which relates to the entitlement of a widow to the pension of a veteran with a disability of less than 45 per cent. There are many, many cases of severe hardship experienced by widows of our war veterans who perhaps had 38 per cent or 44 per cent disability, just below the line, thus eliminating the entitlement of the widow to their pension. If only this right could be given to them it would certainly alleviate the hardship and suffering that many of their widows are now forced to experience.

Without taking the matter further may I simply ask the minister whether, as I said at the beginning, he will consider adding to the amendment that he has already made these two suggestions that we in the official opposition propose.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to follow my hon. friend from Norfolk-Haldimand (Mr. Knowles). Despite our being in different parties, we seem to agree on almost all subjects. There is only one subject on which we have a strong disagreement, but that is not before us today.

We are at the report stage of this bill, and I suppose we have to face the fact that, technically speaking, all that is before the House at the moment is the amendment moved by the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé) which would extend the rights in the Hong Kong provision to merchant seamen and any others who were prisoners of war of the Japanese during the last four years of World War II.

We welcome the amendment that the minister has moved, and there is no question that it will receive the unanimous support of the House. As the minister pointed out, this was a recommendation that was made by the veterans affairs committee, on the motion of the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. MacRae), to whom a just tribute has already been paid. We put it forward as a recommendation rather than as our own amendment to the bill because, since it involves the expenditure of money, we cannot put it in the form of an amendment. It requires the minister to assure us that the Governor General agrees, and since the minister has done so we are happy to support the amendment.

We understand, of course, that it will not affect very many people. There might be three, four or five merchant seamen or others who were not engaged in the actual services but were, nevertheless, prisoners of the Japanese during the years in question. However, even though the amendment affects 4, 5 or half a dozen people

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at the most, it is the right action to take and we are glad it is being taken.

Like my namesake, there are a number of other amendments that we wish the minister were making, but perhaps I will get to them when we reach third reading stage of the bill where there is a little wider latitude. I support the suggestions which have just been made by the hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand, but I should like to take a few seconds to underline in particular our disappointment that the minister has not accepted the other recommendation that our committee made. It was a unanimous recommendation and has to do with the maximum amount of exceptional incapacity allowance.

This recommendation is on all fours with the one now being accepted in that it was the subject of a recommendation of the committee. It was also supported by the committee unanimously, and we are quite disappointed that the minister has not yet seen fit to accept it. Whereas the one he has accepted will affect only four or five people, the other recommendation would affect a few hundred people and we think it too should be accepted.

However, rather than indulge in repetition, since I plan to say something about this at the third stage and to move an appropriate amendment at that time, I shall not continue to discuss the matter now. I rise simply to say that as far as the item actually before us is concerned we support wholeheartedly the proposition that merchant seamen and others who were prisoners of war of the Japanese should get the same pension arrangements that are provided for the service personnel who were prisoners in Hong Kong.

Motion (Mr. Dubé) agreed to.

Hon. Jean-Eudes Dubé (Minister of Veterans Affairs) moved that Bill C-203, to amend the Pension Act and the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: When shall the said bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Dubé moved that the bill be read the third time and do pass.

He said: Mr. Speaker, at this stage I should like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, to its present chairman and its former chairman, for the speedy and excellent way in which they have carried out the review of this bill to amend the Pension Act. I was delighted but not surprised that the committee endorsed all of its main provisions. They have made a number of amendments to the bill itself, but none of these improvements change the principle of the bill and are quite acceptable to the government.