

Supply—Veterans Affairs

individual award might, indeed, be sufficient if it were based on a straightforward comparison between the real needs of the veteran himself and the salaries of the civil servants to be selected. I suspect from inquiries I have made that the theoretical awards on the basis I have mentioned, namely, a wife and two children, are an illusion. Too many disabled veterans end up with neither children nor a wife and an entirely inadequate pension.

• (5:40 p.m.)

We are comparing that packet, veteran plus dependants, with the low paid civil service employee. I do not think it would be very difficult, with the computers available, for the Minister of Veterans Affairs to give some consideration to the question of whether or not a basis with adequate remuneration for the veteran alone might in most circumstances be more equitable. There are many other considerations that enter into this picture. There have been cases where wives have not really been dependants in the true sense of the word.

Bearing in mind that the main burden of our responsibilities at the moment is toward people who served in world war II, which now is a full generation ago, and to a lesser degree to those who served in world war I, perhaps it would be timely for the Department of Veterans Affairs to make a thorough statistical study of what would be the difference if the base of compensation were to shift, with some qualification provided to meet special needs—

Mr. Chatterton: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Chairman. We on this side purposely cut down our speeches so that the minister would have a chance to reply before six o'clock. The discussion which the hon. member for Leeds is now carrying on could be more properly carried on after we have received the Woods report. We want to get these estimates accepted today because we might not have a chance after six o'clock.

Mr. Matheson: Mr. Chairman, I have nothing more to add.

Mr. Chatterton: You were taking up time.

Mr. Matheson: That is not fair.

Mr. Teillet: Mr. Chairman, on rising to reply to the representations and queries I wish to express my thanks to the members of the committee for the interest they have again shown in this very important subject. The hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich was

the first to speak and some of the subjects he covered were also mentioned by a number of other hon. members. Speaking of the Veterans Land Act, which I know interests the hon. gentleman very much, I urge him to understand that there is no question of a means test being applied but certain guide lines—I know that is a much misused word—have been issued to the regional offices in the hope that veterans would go to those offices, ask for explanations and get a clear understanding of what is involved. The hon. gentleman mentioned a figure of \$7,000 which was used as a guide line, as an income below which veterans would be given priority. That \$7,000 does not include such things as pensions, the wife's income, or family allowances. It is personal income outside of these other things.

This is the guide line that was given and it is hoped that not too many people will be affected. However, it is not mandatory and instructions have gone out that every case is to be judged on its merits in order to avoid the kind of thing that the hon. gentleman mentioned where in some cases a matter of a few dollars might cause hardship. This is only a guide and we hope that no hardship will result.

Mr. Chatterton: Will the minister assure the house that no veteran will be denied a loan simply because of income?

Mr. Teillet: I do not believe I could give that assurance because the case may arise—I am not speaking of new construction—where a veteran wants to improve his holding but his income is at such a level that it may be felt he could wait for a year before doing so. That could result from this directive.

Mr. Chatterton: Could the minister give us the assurance that no veteran, other than a veteran wanting to build a new house, applying to acquire a small holding or farm will be denied a loan on account of income?

Mr. Teillet: Again I would say that generally speaking this would be the case. I hesitate to give an absolute assurance. A case may easily develop where a veteran might be requested to wait for a year because his personal circumstances were such that he could do so without any hardship. This does not affect the applications of veterans at any time and those who qualify will be eligible, even those who may be asked to delay for a year. It is also my understanding that any effect on farm lending will be negligible. I believe that covers most of the points raised by the hon.