

War Veterans' Allowance Act

given credit for what it has done. I think the veterans should be thankful for what they are receiving, as I am sure they will be. I also think they should remember that far too often, in the administration of government in Canada, these people are forgotten and neglected when the government sits in the house with a large majority. I well remember the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Johnston) back in the 1940's when we were fighting battles to get some justice for men under the soldiers settlement board, and the difficulty with which we were confronted in getting anything done. What a change we have today. What an improvement it is. There are many veterans in Canada today who served with the Canadian forces in the first war and who do not qualify for a pension but who are today feeling the effects of their service. The opportunity to take care of their needs will not last for too many years more. I trust that the voice of their representatives will be heard in this house and that action will be taken. We are going to support this legislation. We hope it gets through as quickly as possible.

Mr. W. G. Beech (York South): Mr. Speaker, the introduction of the bill covering improvements in the veterans legislation indicates to me at least that the opinions expressed by the members of the government whilst in opposition have not changed now that they form the government. It is true that the bills do not go as far as we should have liked to see them go. However, in the bills there is nothing which indicates that this is the last thinking on the part of the government. This is an emergency session called to get these extra increases as soon as possible into the hands of the recipients who need them so badly. I am convinced that the government has been as generous as possible, in the absence of a budget, and that all the legislation introduced this session will be reviewed at the next session. We have been assured by the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Brooks) that at that time a standing committee will be set up with, we hope, full powers to delve into all phases of the Pension Act, the War Veterans' Allowance Act and all other matters pertaining to the veterans charter.

We have in Canada the finest veterans legislation in the world but I do not think it was the intention of parliament, whilst setting aside this legislation, to build a fence around that act so that the Canadian Legion must spend \$200,000 a year, to say nothing of what is spent by other organizations, in

helping veterans to get those things that parliament has set aside as a matter of right.

The success of the service bureau offices of the Canadian Legion in getting pensions for hundreds of veterans whose applications had been refused by the pension board indicates the need for a more liberal interpretation in the consideration of these applications. The benefit of the doubt clause was inserted in the Pension Act in order to permit some latitude to the pension commission, but it has been a source of constant complaint on behalf of veterans organizations that that clause is being in large measure ignored. This and many other matters will be discussed, I am sure, before the standing committee which will be set up at the next session.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I have one other observation to make and it is this. We have upon the statute books of this country an act setting aside November 11 as Remembrance Day for the honouring and remembering of thousands of veterans who died for those things which we as Canadians hold dear and cherish. I am informed that it is the practice of this house to sit on Remembrance Day. I am wondering whether this practice of "business as usual" is giving the right encouragement to the proper observance by the citizens of Canada of this most sacred and important day in the history of Canada.

Mr. W. G. Dinsdale (Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: I recognize the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Veterans Affairs. I must inform the house that if the minister were to speak now, as he was the mover of this motion, he would close the debate. I understand that the parliamentary assistant in the department is speaking in the minister's place with his authority. The rules do not appear to prescribe what consequence that has or whether it is permissible. However, I understand that the house previously has accepted the parliamentary assistant in similar circumstances and of course it is the privilege of the house to accept that position tonight.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. E. G. Hansell (Macleod): Mr. Speaker, I have no objection to the parliamentary assistant speaking now but I do not believe we should let it be a precedent for establishing a rule that a parliamentary assistant can close a debate when he speaks. If he wishes to speak and if he is the last speaker, then that is all right, but I do not believe that the