

The Address—Mr. Fair

a just peace before the year is out so that our boys who have answered the call to serve under the command of the United Nations in that country may all come back to celebrate with their families the approaching Christmas and New Year's day.

(Text):

Mr. Robert Fair (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, the throne speech debate has now been in progress from time to time for a number of weeks and, judging by the list of speakers still on our desks, we are perhaps going to carry on for some days yet. I believe this is a good thing for, at this particular session, we have no budget to deal with and no estimates, so this is the only occasion on which many of us will have an opportunity to state our grievances.

During the course of the debate many questions have been raised and some legislation has been passed, particularly the legislation providing for the old age pension. I understand that legislation is now being dealt with at the other end of the building, and I hope that on this occasion no such action will be taken as was taken when the first old age pension bill was sent there. I believe the gentlemen at that end of the house now realize the plight of many of our older people, and I hope they will give the bill speedy passage. I shall not be at all disappointed if they should come through with a recommendation to increase the amount of the pension.

During the debate we have had one amendment to the motion disposed of; and on November 7, immediately after that first vote was taken, the hon. member for Acadia (Mr. Quelch) moved the following amendment:

That the amendment be amended by adding thereto the following words:

"Furthermore we regret that Your Excellency's advisers have failed to compensate the recipients of war veterans allowance for the increase in the cost of living by an appropriate increase in the amount of the allowance."

I believe that every veteran in the house today should support that subamendment; and were they all free to express their opinions I believe they would do so. Personally I want to support it in any way I can, even to the extent of paying additional taxes to make that payment possible. Had I previously been in doubt about my stand on this particular subamendment, I had my mind fully made up a week ago yesterday when

[Mr. Dumas.]

we had the Remembrance day service down at the cenotaph. During the time that the governor general took the salute I stood a short distance from where he was on the stand; with him were several cabinet ministers including the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott), the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton), and the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Lapointe). Also with them were the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) and some other gentlemen whom I did not know. I know these men are carrying a terrific load today; but as the groups of old-timers, and even the little fellows, passed by, a tinge of bitterness was raised in me when I saw many of these veterans carrying canes which they did not then use. Looking back to the time of the first great war I can remember the great pains taken to find uniforms for and to give training to many of these veterans. Then their supplies were provided for them while they were overseas fighting. Since they came back we have been told of the struggle they had over there, of the mud they had to lie in and of many other things. Even during the second world war we also provided vast sums of money to equip the men who fought over there, and when they came back we gave them a fairly good deal compared with that given to the veterans of the first war. Now I am wondering—and I asked myself this question a week ago Sunday—why we cannot look after these old fellows after they came back, after their health had been broken and after, as a result of conditions that had been permitted in this country, they were not able to save enough during their working days to take care of themselves in their old age. After a man reaches 40 or 45 years of age today, industry no longer wants him. Many of these old veterans had been in industry, and when they reached a certain age they were thrown out. Now they cannot find employment. I feel it is our duty—the duty of this parliament and this government—to supply them with a decent livelihood for the rest of their days.

I was quite satisfied—in fact I did some desk pounding—the other day when the Minister of Veterans Affairs made his announcement—on Friday last I believe—telling us what the legislation will provide for recipients of pensions under the Pension Act. This legislation was perhaps grudgingly brought down in the house because the speech from the throne does not make any mention of it; but because of pressure that was exerted