

*Supply—Veteran's Affairs*

pension by 30 per cent and make it retroactive to last November, when we approved the increases in principle. Our veterans have suffered distress over the past few years. There has been a unanimous recommendation from the committee and all corners of the house, and we can undo some of the injustice done to these men by making the payments retroactive to last November. I am quite sure this would meet with the approval of the legion, the veterans themselves and all members of this house.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, I understand there is a disposition to endeavour to conclude this evening the discussion on the estimates of this department. Therefore my remarks will be exceptionally brief. Perhaps my understanding of the situation is incorrect, but that is what I was led to believe.

**Mr. Churchill:** That is quite incorrect.

**Mr. Patterson:** We do not have any representative on the standing committee on veterans affairs, but when I had the opportunity of serving on that committee I discovered that partisan considerations had no place whatsoever in the work and activities of the committee. Therefore, I do not have any reason to believe tonight that any matter pertinent to the welfare of the veterans has been overlooked.

However, Mr. Chairman, there are several observations I should like to make in connection with the two matters the minister raised this evening. First of all, I would refer to the Woods commission report and then to the interim increases. All members of the house realize that these matters have been raised on many occasions in the past. Members from all parties, and this includes our party, have asked the minister questions with respect to the date on which he expected the Woods commission report to be tabled.

In spite of all the questions asked we have been unable to obtain a satisfactory answer. I suppose this was because the minister did not know. I believe it is unfortunate that the commission report has been delayed for this long. However, we all recognize the fact that there are many problems involved in this question and perhaps it is better that the commission take a little longer and be sure of its ground before tabling the report.

In the meantime, the veterans have been wondering just what has been going on and what they can hope for when the report of the commission is tabled. We are happy

[Mr. Bigg.]

tonight to learn the minister expects to receive the report momentarily.

The other matter relates to interim increases. On several occasions the minister assured us that should the report of this commission be long delayed, further interim increases would be considered. During the summer recess I communicated with the minister, reminded him of the fact that the commission report had been long delayed and asked him to give consideration to the fulfilment of his commitment that consideration would be given to further interim increases. I was once again assured that this matter was under consideration. We have become used to this type of reply from many departments, but at least we are glad the matter is still under consideration and has not been forgotten.

The veterans are greatly disturbed about this delay. Reference has been made tonight to the attitude taken by the veterans organizations. The fact that the president of the Canadian Legion saw fit to write such a letter to the Prime Minister is indicative of the fact they are very disturbed about the whole situation. Therefore, I believe that in fairness to the veterans and in recognition of the promise the minister has made, further interim increases should be made without delay. Only this will prove to the veterans that the Department of Veterans Affairs, the minister and the government are concerned about the plight of the veterans.

There is just one other matter that I should like to mention. It concerns the effect on the pension levels of various other benefits that the veterans may receive. I refer to the income supplement payment and to compensation that may come from workmen's compensation boards, and so on.

• (10:00 p.m.)

It is my understanding that these benefits which accrue to the veterans in recognition of their services and sacrifices are something that the veterans have a right to expect. They were promised that these would be recognized. I do not believe that any other benefit, such as income supplement, compensation or anything else, should interfere in any way with the levels of benefit that the veterans are receiving under the pension rates. These are the matters which I wish to call to the attention of the minister at this time.

**The Assistant Deputy Chairman:** It being ten o'clock shall I rise, report progress and request leave to sit again at the next sitting of the house?