

*The Address—Mr. Fulton*

for married men. This problem must be approached bearing in mind the fact that the recipients of war veterans allowance frequently have no other source of income, which means that a single man is compelled to live on \$40 a month and a married man on \$70 a month.

I bring to witness here no less an authority than the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. McCann) that the purchasing power of the dollar has fallen, in terms of the pre-war dollar, to about 45 cents. Therefore what we are doing with the present rate of war veterans allowance is to compel a single man to live on something less than \$20 a month in terms of the pre-war dollar or if married on something between \$30 and \$35 a month in terms of real purchasing power.

The second source of hardship results from the means test which is still applied to payment of veterans allowance, and compels many men, who could supplement the allowance, to live at the starvation levels to which I have referred. I suggest that the time has long passed when this situation and these hardships should have been relieved. It is not good enough to tell the recipients of war veterans allowance that they must wait until next summer some time—until after the studies and recommendations of a committee have been implemented. Their needs are perfectly obvious now. They do not need a committee to emphasize them or to establish what they are.

The claims for relief of these men can best be seen, if we deal with them under the same two categories. First, let us deal with the inadequacy of the level of payment. Surely if we recognize, as the War Veterans Allowance Act does, that the earning capacity of these men has been reduced on account of their service in the armed forces of their country, then we simply cannot justify the present legislation which compels them to exist at starvation levels. If we are prepared to recognize that they are entitled to something for the sacrifices which they have made and for the impairment of their health and their earning power, then surely we can be generous in the treatment that we mete out to them. In their recommendation, with which I am fully in agreement, the Canadian Legion has, I think, stated the very minimum to which these men are entitled, namely, that the minimum under the war veterans allowance be increased to \$50 for a single man and \$100 for a married man.

**Mr. Knowles:** And even that is not enough.

**Mr. Fulton:** Then the other course of action which is necessary to relieve the hardship being suffered is in connection with the means test. I think this should be called a

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“mean test” because, when it is maintained at its present level, it is indicative of a mean and narrow approach to this problem, and one which is not worthy of a government which, in other respects, when pressure has been applied, seems prepared to treat our veterans generously. Let us not be mean to the old war veteran. Let us treat him with generosity equal to that with which we treat other veterans. Surely this means test which compels men, who might otherwise be able to supplement their income, to live at starvation levels should either be eliminated or should at least be raised to sensible and decent levels so that war veterans allowance recipients might live decently and in a dignified manner instead of at bare subsistence levels, eking out the last few years of their lives in poverty.

When you consider what is going to happen even under the increases which have been announced recently with respect to old age pension and disability pension, you can see the iniquities of the means test at its present level. In the course of the discussions on the old age pension, the Minister of Veterans Affairs made it quite clear that the increased level of old age pension is not going to benefit the war veterans allowance recipients because their income is still limited by the maximum permissible under the means test regulations to \$50 a month in the case of a single man and something less than \$100 a month in the case of a married man.

**Mr. Knowles:** Is it not considerably less than that?

**Mr. Fulton:** Even with other allowable income, it is under \$100 a month; actually it comes to \$1,100 a year in the case of a married man on war veterans allowance. And when you read the evidence given by the deputy minister of veterans affairs before the veterans affairs committee at the session in the spring of this year, it becomes clear that, even in the case of the war veterans allowance recipient who is also in receipt of a disability pension, the same means test applies; so that the increase in the present level of disability pension which was announced by the minister on Friday will be of no benefit to the war veterans allowance recipient because he will still be subject to the same over-all limitation on his income.

In this connection, Mr. Speaker, I feel that the amendment moved by the hon. member for Acadia (Mr. Quelch) perfectly reflects the attitude which should be shown by this house and by the government to the man on war veterans allowance. It is time that the war veterans allowance legislation was