

Pension Act

But once that year was over she was denied the continued payment of this pension because she is not yet 55, in fact she is 44 and does not suffer from any physical disability and is in good health.

So far, Mr. Speaker, I believe everything meets with the requirements of the act. Yet as in all laws, I think that sometimes exceptions must be made and in the case of Mrs. Paradis which I submitted to the minister, I think that an exception could very well have been granted because even if that lady is not 55 years old and is in good health, she cannot work outside for the very good reason that she is the mother of ten children who all live with her, including eight who still go to school. So it is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that for this reason this lady cannot work outside to earn a living as others could. For these reasons, I think that the act should provide for exceptions and that it should provide for the continued payment of a pension to a widow who finds herself in such a position.

Once again I ask the minister to look very carefully into such cases as that of Mrs. Paradis, which I submitted to him, to see whether it might not be possible to help people like her. I imagine there are not thousands of such cases in Canada, they must be isolated cases; but the fact remains that, to my mind, they are almost appalling since that lady can do nothing other than resort to welfare allowances which represent about 50 per cent of what she got until then as a veteran's widow. Mr. Speaker, I believe those are important points and I urge the minister to look into them again to see if it might not be possible to make exceptions to the law from time to time to help people who are in such dire need.

Mr. Albert Bécharde (Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to prolong this debate indefinitely, but coming from a province that has contributed much during the two last world conflicts, that contributed much in human capital, and specially coming from an area which, in terms of its population, did more than its share in the two conflicts that cast a gloom over our history, I feel that it is proper for me to stand here and thank the government, and especially the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald), for this legislation which is welcomed, as he knows, not only by hon. members in this House but by all veterans and by those he had an opportunity to meet in my riding and told him how happy they were with that new legislation for them.

As the hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand (Mr. Knowles) suggested earlier, it is of course only part of what Canada, what Canadians owe to those who went overseas to protect our rights and freedoms.

We are also sure that it is not the end of measures to help veterans and that we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the minister personally for the work he has done for veterans since he has taken over that portfolio. His own personal services were praised and I believe it is also appropri-

[Mr. Laprise.]

ate to pay tribute to his courage and his determination as a Canadian for the part he took in the last world conflict.

Mr. Speaker, as was suggested by those who spoke before me, the hon. member for Abitibi (Mr. Laprise), the hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand (Mr. Knowles) as well as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) who is a champion in this area, and as I already suggested some two weeks ago and I repeat, like my colleagues I want to ask for better treatment of veterans' widows—I was recently told that the word "widow" is no longer used but rather veteran's survivor—so as to do away with that pension maximum of 48 per cent now required under the law so that when a veteran dies, his widow, whatever the pension her husband was receiving, can have a pension so as to avoid being placed in a situation such as that suggested by the hon. member for Abitibi.

I would also like to mention what he referred to, but unfortunately he has left. It is always the same thing; he mentioned that it was coming too late, that it should have been done two or three years ago. I believe it is quite easy to say that but since this government does not have the magical financial resources which the Social Credit party has, we must go with the budget, with the finances of this country and the present system.

Mr. Speaker, once again I want to thank the Minister of Veterans Affairs on behalf of the veterans of my riding as well as all veterans across Canada for that legislation which is welcomed with great happiness.

● (1752)

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and the House went into committee thereon, Mr. Laniel in the chair.

Clauses 1 to 4 agreed to.

On Clause 5—*Coming into force*.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Chairman, may I ask just one question about clause 5 which provides for this amending legislation to come into effect on July 1, 1978. May we assume that the offices which write and send out the cheques are geared up for this legislation and that the increases provided in this bill will be reflected in the cheques which veterans receive in July?

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): Mr. Chairman, the answer to the hon. member's question is that this is what we anticipate in our department at this time.