

War Veterans Allowance Act

mentioned by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill).

The section we are discussing today was brought in in 1957 by the previous government. It allowed those veterans who did not get beyond the United Kingdom to become eligible for war veterans allowance, provided they had served a year prior to November 12, 1918. In world war I the United Kingdom was not classed as a theatre of war, but in world war II it was. Therefore veterans of world war I and world war II have been treated differently, with the balance in favour of the veterans of world war II. I should like to read just one quotation from the debates of 1957 in this connection, Mr. Speaker. I have other quotations, but I do not wish to take up the time of the house. I shall read from page 822 of the *House of Commons Debates*, 1957-58. The hon. member for Acadia at that time, Mr. Quelch, said:

Then I understand that veterans who saw service in England only, under certain conditions will be allowed to receive the war veterans allowance. I have always argued that where a veteran volunteered for service in any theatre of war he was entitled to the war veterans allowance even though he did not get beyond England because that was not his fault. He had volunteered for service anywhere. If the army found that they could use him to better advantage in England than elsewhere, the veteran should not be penalized as a consequence. I am hoping that the legislation will provide that all these veterans who volunteered for service overseas and were left in England will be eligible for the war veterans allowance.

When this legislation was originally drafted it was said it was to look after those who were pre-aged due to hardships and the dangers of serving in the trenches in world war I. The one year provision of service prior to November 12, 1918 was actually recommended by the Royal Canadian Legion and the government accepted that recommendation. I have my doubts about the administration of this bill, for two reasons. First of all, I think for the first time we are going to fragment eligibility. At the present time you are either eligible for a pension or you are not eligible, and then you draw an amount based on the pension or on your disability, depending on the kind of pension you draw. Here we are introducing, for the first time in legislation, a percentage of eligibility. The hon. member in his bill mentions as an example 200 days of service. Therefore a man would be really 200-365ths eligible. At the present time, as most hon. members are aware, the war veterans allowance for a married man is \$144 a month. If we were to carry this bill to its extreme, where the man served for one

day in the United Kingdom—which is possible—for compassionate reasons or for some other reason—

Mr. Herridge: Or on the high seas.

Mr. Harley: I thank the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge). As I was saying, if a man served for one day in the United Kingdom he would be eligible for a pension of 1-365th of \$144 a month, which amounts to 40 cents a month. I think this is highly impractical; there must be a cut-off date somewhere. I disagree with the form of this bill, and in a few moments I shall deal with what I think should be done in this respect. There should be no time limit. With regard to the second reason, which is really based on the first, this fragmentation makes the bill administratively impossible. I have already pointed out that you could have a situation where a veteran was eligible for a 1-365th pension amounting to 40 cents a month. What happens to the veteran who is receiving war veterans allowance and who is entitled to receive treatment for any illness in a war veterans hospital? Does this mean he is eligible, again, for 1-365th of his medication, medicine and drugs? In other words, again there has to be a cut-off date for his treatment. If this date is not to be included in any legislation it becomes administratively impossible for the authorities to calculate what would be the entitlement of a veteran in hospital, having regard to the fraction of time that he served.

As I said when I rose to speak on this bill, Mr. Speaker, I think it is an attempt by the hon. member to bring in a very good principle. I personally believe the bill should be amended by removing from clause (b) all the words after "world war I", which would then mean that anybody who served in the United Kingdom during world war I would be eligible. I think any veteran who served in England in world war I should be given the same entitlement as a veteran of world war II. I would be prepared to support the bill, with that amendment, completely.

May I call it six o'clock, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. MacInnis: Mr. Speaker, as it is not yet six o'clock I wonder whether the house would give consideration to maintaining this particular bill in its priority on the order paper in order that further discussion could be had on it later this session? I see that it is not yet six o'clock, and I would ask that this permission be given by the house.