

Children of War Dead

Resolution reported, read the second time and concurred in.

Mr. Abbott thereupon moved for leave to introduce Bill No. 78, to approve the financial agreement between the government of Canada and the government of the United Kingdom.

Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.

CHILDREN OF WAR DEAD

AMENDMENTS EXTENDING EDUCATION BENEFITS

Hon. W. E. Harris (for the Minister of Veterans Affairs) moved the second reading of Bill No. 27, to amend the Children of War Dead (Education Assistance) Act.

Mr. Brooks: Has the parliamentary assistant any further explanation to make on this bill?

Mr. C. E. Bennett (Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I do not think that I can add anything to the explanation I gave on Friday. This bill, if passed, will amend the Children of War Dead (Education Assistance) Act to make eligible certain children who are presently not eligible. Benefits provided by the present act are being denied to a small group of Canadians who are otherwise qualified but whose pension was not in force on their twenty-first birthday. The members of this group are still under 25 years of age but for some reason or other they were not in receipt of pension on their twenty-first birthday. The bill proposes also to make eligible children of air raid precaution workers and members of voluntary aid detachments whose parents' deaths were attributed to war service.

Mr. A. J. Brooks (Royal): Mr. Speaker, when this resolution was before the house a few days ago I made a few comments with regard to it. The bill is not very extensive in scope. As the parliamentary assistant explained to us at that time, it is simply plugging up some holes that they found. Frankly I am surprised that there were not more holes found because the bill does not seem to meet all the requirements that we felt it should meet when the matter was before the house last year.

It will be remembered that the bill last year was discussed quite extensively and it created a lot of interest in the house and throughout the country. The bill had been held over for a long time. In 1946 the veterans affairs committee felt that some

[Mr. Macdonnell.]

attention should be given to providing assistance to the children of deceased veteran pensioners. The act has been in force since July, 1953.

I think it would be of interest to the house and to hon. members generally if the minister or his parliamentary assistant would let us know just what the situation is. We should like to be informed as to how many students are taking advantage of this assistance, what it is costing the country, and what the possibilities are for increasing the number of students. When the matter was before the house last year the minister told us that they anticipated about 1,200 students would be helped at a cost of \$600,000.

When the bill was before the house the chief criticism of hon. members was that the \$25 being paid was too little, that greater assistance should be provided. It was explained that tuition and other fees, as well as the cost of books, were being paid for. It has been long advocated by the Legion and members of the veterans affairs committees that the children of war veterans should receive the same assistance as unmarried veterans. As a matter of fact, this recommendation of the Legion has been before the veterans affairs committee at different times and has received the approval of that committee. For the information of the house I would like to read just what that recommendation was in respect to children of deceased servicemen. It reads as follows:

That the federal government instigate a policy for the children of deceased servicemen similar to that in force for single student veterans attending university or vocational training schools and receiving a monthly allowance under the rehabilitation act.

The amount that was given to single veterans, as hon. members will remember, was \$70 besides tuition and a portion of fees. There is quite a difference between \$25 and \$70 and it certainly costs the student, or the child of a veteran's widow attending a university, just as much as it costs the single veteran, and I think, as I pointed out last year, that most of these students are under 16, 17 or 18 years of age. They were not like single veterans who came back and as grown men had an opportunity to go out and earn a great deal of money to assist in their education. These children under 16, 17 and 18 years of age had very little opportunity to earn money, and the means of the widow, of course, are limited by the amount of pension she receives.

I had hoped, Mr. Speaker, that there would be some amendment this year increasing the amount, for instance, that would be paid to those students. Another objection that was taken last year was that the bill restricted