

War Veterans' Allowance Act

The merchant seaman did not get any re-establishment grants or any gratuities. In many instances he served under naval officers. He took the same chances as the men in the regular services and I sincerely hope, sir, that when the standing committee is set up the consideration of the status of merchant seamen will be one of the first items that the committee will tackle.

Mr. H. J. Murphy (Westmorland): Mr. Speaker, I want to take part very briefly in this debate to express my endorsement of this legislation at this time.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Brooks) on his elevation to that post. Since he is a New Brunswicker we naturally expect him to turn in an excellent job as minister of that department. I say this to the minister because it was not always thus between the member for Westmorland and the member for Royal. A short time ago I read the life of Sir Leonard Tilley and I found that the last duel fought in the province of New Brunswick was fought between the member for Westmorland and the member for Queens, which is now Royal. We have come a long way since that time.

Mr. Brooks: Who won?

Mr. Murphy (Westmorland): Since Sir Leonard Tilley was involved I will not give the end of the duel.

I have always been interested in this legislation and especially in the war veterans allowance. When I practised law in Moncton after the war, I was interviewed by a field man of the Department of Veterans Affairs and asked to take on the administration of four or five cheques for war veterans receiving war veterans allowance who needed some assistance in handling their cheques so that they would receive the necessities of life.

Although I am not a recipient of war veterans allowance, of course, I know how these men feel and I know how it is to live on the pension paid. As I said, it was my duty to see that they received the necessities of life. At that time the department allowed \$120 a year for clothing and I can tell you that it was difficult for me to see that they were well-clothed for that amount.

This is a step in the right direction. I know that the Minister of Veterans Affairs has always taken an interest in this matter. I served with him on the veterans affairs committee during the last parliament. On that committee, in our discussions here on these matters as well as outside the house, I was happy to observe that at all times these matters remained above politics and regardless of our party affiliations the life of the veteran

[Mr. Broome.]

came first. As I said at the beginning, I only wish to add my voice in behalf of this measure.

Mr. G. H. Castleden (Yorkton): Mr. Speaker, my words will be very few. I just wish to state that I think this legislation will be welcomed at least as a partial remedy for some of the serious injustices which have marked the administration of veterans affairs in Canada for a number of years. Every branch of the Legion certainly in my constituency has several cases of real injustice, some cases of hardship and actual need. These cases have been growing because of the increased cost of living. The pension which the soldier received seemed adequate at the time he received it but it constantly buys less and less as inflation mounts. This is part of the series of legislation which is very badly needed, legislation which has been neglected, and I am sure that everybody will welcome, every branch of the Legion will welcome the minister's statement that it is his intention to set up a standing committee of this house in which all matters pertaining to veterans affairs can be dealt with, with representation from all parts of the house. I hope that as a result of the recommendations of that committee action will be obtained.

I am sure it is true that veterans, legionnaires and legion groups in the past have constantly passed resolutions; the provincial commands in convention and the dominion command in convention have passed resolutions and have often wondered why it was that so many of the actual needs of the veterans were neglected, passed over and glossed over. They would repeat and repeat year after year their requests that something be done with regard to this branch of war veterans allowances, this branch of the pension, this regulation against the granting of pensions to soldiers who are outside of the dominion, the matter of time which the person concerned was living in the country to qualify for a pension, and so on, and now we find that before this parliament is one month old many of the things which the Legion has asked for for years are going through; they are getting them.

If you make a study of the history of such legislation and the rapidity with which it is passed through this house you will find that this kind of thing has happened on only very few occasions in Canadian history and on every one of the occasions it was when the government was anxious to do something for the people; they were going to make a call on the people in a short time to ask for an endorsement.

I think there is a lesson to be learned here. I think this government should be