

Supply—Veterans Affairs

retroactive pay is insufficient. Something should be done to expedite the handling of appeals in cases such as those I have mentioned.

The Chairman: Shall the item carry?

Mr. Churchill: No. We are waiting for a reply from the minister. If he is not going to reply there will have to be further discussion. I give him the opportunity. Does he intend to answer the questions which have been raised?

Mr. Teillet: I think I should be permitted to wait until all the representations have been made and then reply to the questions. I do not think I ought to get up half a dozen times to speak on different points.

Mr. Chatterton: In that case perhaps the committee should allow the item to stand until we have dealt with the other questions. Otherwise the minister might be ruled out of order when he does rise to speak.

Mr. Teillet: I do not think it is a question of passing this item immediately. After hon. members have asked their questions and made their comments I shall be glad to deal with them.

Mr. Matheson: Mr. Chairman, I should like to make a few comments on this matter. I think we are all deeply in debt to the present minister. The announcement that this rather substantial increase was to come was made on December 20. Anyone who reflects on the events of that time will recall the situation on the London money market, the scramble there, virtually duplicated in every treasury in the western world, the anxious preoccupation with budget balancing, fiscal responsibilities and so on. Bearing in mind the fact that my hon. friend has brought in three substantial increases in the less than five years during which he has held his present portfolio, the increase before the one now contemplated having been on September 1, 1966, and bearing in mind the sacrifices we are asking the Canadian people generally to make so as to present a position of fiscal responsibility and integrity to the world, I think it is greatly to the minister's credit that he should bring forward this recommendation now.

I am sure we are all anxious that the Woods committee report should not be delayed. I feel it would be very wrong if the report came to us in English alone and we had to await a second report in French. As one who appeared before the Woods committee and therefore seized with the highly technical

[Mr. Fawcett.]

arguments that were brought to bear on certain sections of the Pension Act, I can think of nothing more painful than the necessity of re-examining later, in another language, the significance of the committee's recommendations.

We are looking forward not to a modest change in pension legislation but to a new, streamlined act which will meet the requirements of veterans as we find them today rather than as we found them at the conclusion of the war. I think the report will recommend far reaching changes and, as I say, I hope it comes forward very shortly.

During the past week I lost a friend, a member of my battery with the same rank as myself. He left a widow and a family—two children at university, I believe. Had it been possible to implement the recommendations of the Woods committee, the financial position of this veteran before he died might have been altogether different and the circumstances of his dependants would consequently be much more satisfactory. Over the weekend a doctor friend of mine, an active Conservative, incidentally, telephoned to tell me about another friend of mine, a man who fought overseas as a very young fighter pilot and who may die very soon. The changes one might expect from the Woods committee recommendations could very well bring about major improvements in the lives of veterans such as these two and I suggest that the minister, who is most sympathetic in this connection, might reflect on the serious consequences of undue delay.

In calculating pensions paid to veterans we often find that the basis used is the salary currently received by low paid civil servants. By comparison the veteran is thought of as a man with a wife, two children and a 100 per cent disability. Perhaps it was not unnatural to expect that a veteran at the conclusion of a war would have a wife and two children; I can understand why this comparison was made originally. But possibly the French officials whom we interviewed in Paris at the Boulevard des Invalides were correct in their approach, that compensation should be paid with the veteran alone in mind, not his wife and his other dependants.

Such a suggestion is immediately questioned, of course, by experts such as the officials of service organizations who say that additional pension allowances are required in respect of a wife and children or the family simply could not survive. But this approach, I feel, begs the question. The amount of the