

On clause 2—

Mr. McKinnon: Mr. Chairman, I wish to speak for just a couple of moments on this clause. With respect to the remarks which the minister has just made, I want to say that I wish he had made the correction earlier; it would have saved me from doing a lot of mathematics concerning the 15,000 figure rather than 1,500. I also share the feelings of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre about this. As there are so few involved, it might be possible to treat them a little better.

Second, I would like to speak about the war veterans allowance. I welcome the minister's comments about that. I accept his word, of course, that people over 65 will not suffer, which is referred to in *Hansard*. With due respect, I would like to point out that it was his speech which confused me, not the bill. I can honestly say that I got a copy of this bill after ten o'clock this morning. I know it is very difficult with the short time they gave us, and I imagine there was a great deal of racing around done in the department. Nevertheless, that is when I got my copy and I used the minister's speech more than I did the bill when I spoke.

However, at page 11 of the minister's speech it does say "a new war veterans' ceiling and at the same time assess as income all OAS and GIS payments made to recipients over 65". That left me with the impression that, if you are to assess that as income, then it will have a detrimental effect on them.

On page 12 of the minister's speech it also says "by doing this and reducing OAS and GIS exemptions by an identical amount each year we will have eliminated the gap".

That is about all I wanted to comment on. I am pleased with the remarks that have been made about the bill and the preceding bill, namely C-28. I believe that my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, has some more detailed questions.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, as I said by way of an interjection, I regretted that the minister had to make a correction to his speech and tell us that only 1,500 widows would get the benefit of this legislation on October 1 instead of 15,000. To me that makes it all the more urgent that the main-flow in this bill be corrected.

I realize there has not been very much time since the speeches made on second reading were delivered. However, I wonder if the minister has had a chance to reconsider whether, when we get to class 14 on page 11, he will agree to my proposed amendment to strike out that part of the clause which has a delaying effect.

The other question I would like to put to the minister is, in effect, the same one which has just been commented on by the hon. member for Victoria. Is it crystal clear with respect to the War Veterans Allowance Act changes that the ceiling on permissible income is being raised so that no WVA recipient will lose any portion of the OAS and GIS that he is now receiving, in particular so that he will not lose the \$35. Is my interpretation correct that the changes in the War Veterans Allowance Act mean that from here on automatically any

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increases in old age security and the guaranteed income supplement will result in that same increase in the ceiling on permissible income?

So I have two questions to put to the minister: one about making the changes in the 48 per cent rule effective across the board on October 1; and the other, the assurance about the provision in the War Veterans Allowance Act.

Mr. Dupras: Mr. Chairman, I too want to express my satisfaction and pleasure in welcoming the minister back in the House. I know he was hospitalized and that it was only yesterday when he was released from the hospital. I also know how intent he was on bringing this legislation forward before the House adjourned this summer.

[Translation]

That is why, Mr. Chairman, I congratulate myself on being a member of a government and Parliament who offer to my former fellow members of the Canadian armed forces the most generous, the most adequate benefits in the world. As those benefits are being paid to those who have been called the most courageous in the world, the best troops a country could have to protect it, I think it is only fair for the Canadian government to choose to increase benefits that have remained the same since 1973, so that our veterans, those who fought for the allies, those who fought the war of 1939-45 and earlier wars, can enjoy the most generous pensions in the world. I am very happy with this new bill, Mr. Chairman, and trust it will be passed without further delay.

[English]

Mr. Towers: Mr. Chairman, there are two points that I would like to bring to the minister's attention. I also take this opportunity to bring them to the attention of the officials who are in the gallery today.

One particular area to which I think the department and the officials should give consideration concerns the grey area in the granting of pensions. There is some doubt as to whether or not the pension should be either granted or increased. Certainly as a representative of those people, I would be most pleased if the department officials on the pension board or the pension commission would relent just a little and make it easier for the pensioner to get the benefit that probably—more than likely—is his just due. It is this grey area where I think the benefits should go to the individual. I believe it is something that probably would not cost the government that much and it would certainly satisfy a great number of the pensioners involved.

Second, I do not think it is fair for the spouse's income to be associated in any way with whatever should be accruing and could be accruing to the pensioner himself. I know that in some cases the pensioner would have funds available to him if it were not for the wife's income. This is something which is worthy of consideration, and perhaps the minister might have some comment on that.