

War Veterans' Allowance Act

quoted to them already; for that reason it is not my intention to dwell too much on that aspect of the debate.

I may say, Mr. Speaker, that I was somewhat disappointed in the opening remarks made by the minister, for I felt he might have taken the opportunity to give us a great deal more information than he did, information which might have proven very useful in our debate today. Certainly, if it had done nothing else, it might have shortened the amount of discussion on second reading, because so many hon. members who spoke yesterday were in complete darkness as to exactly what the bill contained, with the result that what they had to say yesterday, or part of it at least, will probably be repeated today. This absence of information with regard to the exact changes brought about in the bill is going to cause some hon. members to spend considerable time repeating some of the things which have been said before.

It is unfortunate that there is no standing committee on veterans affairs. I listened carefully to what the minister said last evening regarding his continued interest in the establishment of such a standing committee—I see his parliamentary assistant nodding assent, which means, of course, that he, too, is interested in it—I also recall the minister saying that we were dealing this session with unfinished business and that there was therefore no time to go ahead and set up this particular committee. Well, that may be true.

The hon. member for Rosthern (Mr. Tucker) speaking a few moments ago said that when his party was in power they invariably referred legislation of this kind to such a committee. Then, of course, he had to qualify that in the usual Liberal fashion by adding that there was no time to follow this practice before the last election. I can appreciate both points of view but if there were a standing committee on veterans affairs, as members of all parties have urged from time to time, we should not be facing this particular problem at the present time and the bill would be sent forward to receive more careful consideration than it will be given in present circumstances.

I was pleased to hear the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge) make the remarks he did, and I was glad that his party will continue to be a non-partisan group with regard to such questions as this. My experience has been—and I am sure it has also been the experience of other hon. members—that this committee on veterans affairs has never been partisan in a political sense. We have tried to keep politics out of our discussions and secure for the veteran the type

[Mr. Hahn.]

of legislation we thought was best for him. I am looking forward to an early spring session in which one of the first pieces of legislation to be brought forward will concern the setting up of a standing committee on veterans affairs for which all of us have clamoured for so many years.

In respect to the increases in the allowances, the fact that the government has seen fit to introduce legislation which would increase a single veterans allowance to \$70 as requested in the Legion's brief is commendable. However, I note that the bill does not comply with the request that the married allowance should be increased to \$140 despite the fact that the Legion, in presenting its case in writing—it could not, of course, be heard—showed us that the wages level had increased since 1955 from 141.7, and 149.4 in 1956, to 156.9 in 1957, a total rise of some 15.2 points in the wage index. This, in my view, indicates that if a wage earner in this country requires an increase relative to the wage received in 1955 amounting to such a figure, then certainly the war veterans might have expected that in all instances the increase awarded to them would be comparable.

As the hon. member for Acadia (Mr. Quelch) pointed out yesterday when speaking on the resolution, the question of the permissive ceiling as between the disability pensioner and the war veteran who is able to work is causing us some concern. There is considerable discrimination in the provisions made in the two cases. However, considerable attention has been drawn to the fact that certain cabinet ministers have from time to time indicated their desire to bring the permissive ceiling on allowable earnings to \$1,200 and \$2,000, and there were many instances during the debate in which members referred to the record.

In this particular case may I refer the minister to page 5867 of *Hansard* for July 12 of last year, in which the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra (Mr. Green), now Minister of Public Works had this to say:

The Department of Finance in its wisdom has decided that \$2,000 income should be exempt from taxation; in other words, that the family man requires that amount to exist and that he should not pay any tax on it. I suggest that the same ruling should be made with regard to the married recipient of war veterans allowance. It is a very good argument in support of raising this ceiling to the sum of \$2,000 per year.

It is my recollection, Mr. Speaker, as I am sure it is the recollection of every member of that committee, that it was not just the present Minister of Public Works (Mr. Green), or the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) or the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Brooks) who have from time to time