

decisions are final and binding, but if new evidence can be produced which has not already been considered a case may be re-opened, or the Pension Review Board may direct the Pension Commission or the Entitlement Board to hold a further hearing.

● (1430)

It is this Pension Review Board which is the sole concern of Bill C-11, the bill we have before us. The original board was made up of a chairman and four permanent members. The number of permanent members remains the same but Bill C-11 provides for the appointment of two *ad hoc* members for terms not exceeding one year. It also extends the tenure of the permanent members from five to ten years, and provides for one of them to be appointed deputy chairman to preside over meetings and to exercise the authority of the chairman in his absence. It clarifies the provision relating to the termination of office of board members and provides for the salaries of the *ad hoc* members and deputy chairman. In addition, it provides for a member of the board to act as chairman or deputy chairman in the event of the absence or incapacity of the chairman or deputy chairman.

The *ad hoc* members are required because the Pension Commission now has a backlog of some 3,000 claims, and the number of applications to each of the three bodies is increasing rapidly. In the last three years appeals to the Pension Review Board have increased at the rate of 200 per year. The number of appeals has gone from 476 in 1973 to 1,200 in 1976. The increase in 1975 was 39 per cent over 1974, and the increase last year was 57 per cent over 1975. The Pension Review Board, with its present five members, can deal with about 500 cases per year. They already have a backlog of some 400 cases, and to reduce this number and keep abreast of the increase the *ad hoc* members and other changes are required.

About one-third of the cases dealt with by the Pension Commission are approved, and the reversal of decisions by the Entitlement Board and the Pension Review Board are roughly in the same proportion.

Apart from reviewing pension claims, another very important duty of the Pension Review Board is to interpret the Pension Act. In this connection the Pension Review Board is building up a body of jurisprudence and precedents which should be of the greatest assistance to the Pension Commission and to the Entitlement Board, and should in time reduce the number of appeals.

Canada can be justly proud of its veterans legislation, commonly referred to as the Veterans' Charter. It is by far the best in the whole world though it is still capable of improvement. The adjudication of claims by the Pension Commission needs to be speeded up, because in many cases it takes months—sometimes a year—from the time the veteran files his claim to the time that the commission hands down the initial decision. Then more months elapse while the claim is dealt with by the Entitlement Board and finally by the Pension Review Board.

Honourable senators, I should like to take this opportunity to express my personal gratitude to the members of these three bodies, and to the Veterans' Bureau, for the cooperative and sympathetic manner in which they have dealt with the many cases I have brought to their attention. I do not think a more dedicated and devoted group can be found anywhere in the world. René Jutras, Chairman of the Pension Review Board, is a very old and dear friend of mine. We were deskmates in the other place. We are fortunate in having a person of his talents and capabilities, outlook and sensitivity, as chairman of such an important organization, particularly in its initial and experimental stages. The members of all three bodies deserve our highest commendation.

Bill C-11 was dealt with quite expeditiously in the other place. It received unanimous support. Although it was referred to the Veterans Affairs Committee of the other place, little discussion took place. The purpose of the motion to refer the bill to committee seemed to be aimed more at conforming to the rules of that place as opposed to any necessity of an in-depth inquiry. However, if it is the view of any honourable senator that the bill should be examined in committee, I would be only too happy to move the appropriate motion. In the meantime, I commend the bill to honourable senators.

On motion of Senator Phillips, debate adjourned.

HEALTH, WELFARE AND SCIENCE

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY BAN ON USE OF SACCHARIN—ORDER STANDS

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Buckwold, seconded by the Honourable Senator McDonald:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science be authorized to inquire into and report upon the proposed ban on the use of saccharin.—(*Honourable Senator Sullivan*).

Senator Sullivan: Honourable senators, I ask that this order stand. By way of explanation, I point out that its subject is a scientific one. I am not prepared to accept what we have heard from the department. In view of my association with the scientific community, it is my intention to speak on this subject, which I will do at a later date. I trust at that time I will bring a breath of fresh air into the discussion of this so-called necessary measure.

Order stands.

REGULATIONS AND OTHER STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

CONSIDERATION OF SECOND REPORT OF STANDING JOINT COMMITTEE—DEBATE CONTINUED

The Senate resumed from Wednesday, March 16, the debate on the consideration of the second report of the Stand-