

because the minister felt that $3\frac{1}{2}$ times was an unreasonable figure, but because the government in its wisdom decided it could not justify the expense. I do not believe the suggested compromise of \$3,500 was an unreasonable one. I agree with the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Blair) that this matter should be reconsidered by the committee. I sincerely hope this will be the case.

There really is no point in pursuing other matters. The veterans know that the compromise of the government is a necessary compromise. I think many veterans will be pleased about many of the changes which have been made. I congratulate the minister on the one matter in which he made considerable change. I believe this will be a credit to him and will do a great deal toward solving one of the problems which has vexed veterans over many years. I refer to the establishment of the pension review board. I look forward to it solving some of the problems that have been discussed in the past. It will be a board of last review. I agree with the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton and others who said there will be more difficulty in respect of leave to appeal than under the old system. It was exceedingly difficult even under the old system. I believe, however, that this is a step forward.

It is unfortunate, while this piece of legislation will be the charter of veterans for a number of years to come, that we have not written into and attached to it the type of escalator clause which in a very formal way would provide for the changing needs of veterans and would establish a formal method for increasing the veterans allowance as the years go by, rather than having to come before Parliament.

I should like to congratulate the minister, the chairman of the committee, the witnesses who appeared before the committee and the members of the committee. The advice of the veterans agencies and organizations which was obtained over a long period has been very valuable. I was also very pleased with the representations made and the assistance given to the committee by the officials of the department. I am not one of those who very often is in a position to congratulate the officials of a government department for having been helpful to Members of Parliament. In this department, however, we have officials who have shown an independence which on many occasions has favoured veterans. I sincerely hope and expect that this will be true in the years to come.

Mr. Perrault: That is a good Liberal attitude.

Mr. Peters: Liberal with a small "l". Since I came here 15 years ago I have noticed that in the Veterans Affairs Committee little partisan treatment has been given by Members of Parliament to veterans legislation. The committee was very liberal, again with a small "l", in its study of the legislation and I expect and hope this attitude will continue as long as veterans legislation is necessary in Canada.

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I shall not speak for very long tonight. The remarks made by hon. members opposite and on this side of the House

Pension Acts

reflect the spirit in which the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs made its report, which I believe has been very helpful to the government in the preparation of the legislation which is before us.

As members have pointed out, the process of review of the Pension Act began in 1965. It involved a commission, a standing committee of the House and witnesses who appeared over a long period. The hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall), the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and the hon. member for Shefford (Mr. Rondeau), in speaking for the groups they represent in this House I believe reflected the non-partisan atmosphere in which the work of the committee was conducted. Obviously, the measure before us is very detailed. The work of the committee involved investigation of a very large report and a large number of recommendations. Only in a committee of the House which is charged with this responsibility is it possible to look at the fairly detailed procedures which are spelled out in the bill.

I believe the process which has been involved here, of a parliamentary committee reviewing the white paper and the detailed examination which followed, is something which students of parliamentary procedure might well look at. The minister said the approach of the government had been one of flexibility. Every member of the committee is aware that this is literally true. The members of the committee looked at the evidence and heard the witnesses with an open mind, just as the minister had invited them to do. I believe the unanimous report of the committee had very great influence upon the legislation which is before us.

Hon. members opposite have raised a number of points which I am sure will be raised before the committee. We will examine them, and no doubt there will be further hearings. I hope, however, that we have now reached the stage where any delay will be absolutely minimal. I as chairman, and I believe every member of the committee, was pleased to see that the first item of business before Parliament in 1971 was this legislation. The minister regretted that it could not be brought in before the recess, but this is one of the things which could not be overcome.

● (9:50 p.m.)

However, we are very pleased that it has reached this stage. With those few remarks may I say that I look forward to an early referral of this legislation to the committee which will, I am sure, conscientiously do its job.

Mr. F. J. Bigg (Pembina): Because of the lateness of the hour, Mr. Speaker, and since we want to get the legislation through today, I will be very brief. I am very pleased with most of the bill. The committee worked very hard, and, as our amiable chairman said, the report was unanimous. However, I think an important point should be made. Today, when there are efforts to downgrade Parliament, I think something should be pointed out that is not well known to the public, namely, how hard some Members of Parliament work. Members of the