

War Veterans' Allowance Act

of our party will welcome the improvements which have been mentioned by the minister.

The first improvement is in regard to increasing the monthly rate payable to single veterans from \$60 to \$70 a month. That, perhaps, is not going to make so great a difference as some may think, because, as the minister pointed out, a person who had no other means of livelihood was able to obtain assistance from the assistance fund, and augment that \$60 a month. Nothing is proposed with regard to increasing the amount to be paid as a basic rate to married veterans, and the minister sought to excuse this omission by referring to the assistance fund and to the fact that the ceiling on income had been raised. I intend to deal with this matter briefly later on.

With regard to the proposal that veterans of the first world war who served only in the United Kingdom should receive the benefit of the act if they served at least 365 days in that country, I think most of us realizing that those who served in the second world war have always had this particular benefit have felt the time had arrived when it should be extended to those earlier veterans even though they did not get any further than the United Kingdom, and that the time had come to improve the position of the veteran of the first world war who was kept in England by order of his superiors and often against his own will.

I realize that the Canadian Legion has recently recommended that this be extended only to those who served one year in the United Kingdom and the bill follows that recommendation.

Naturally I am personally glad to see the government going that far in recognizing the position of these old veterans most of whom are now over 60 years of age and in need of more assistance than heretofore. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the same reasoning under which it is to be granted to those who served in the United Kingdom for one year should be applied to those who had any service whatever in the United Kingdom. There is no similar restriction of a year's service in relation to those who served in world war II as to receiving the benefit of the allowance and I think the same reasoning should apply in removing the restriction regarding those who served in world war I in the United Kingdom.

Because the Canadian Legion has gone only this far in its recommendation doubtless the minister feels he has gone far enough in recognizing the position of these ex-servicemen, but I presume he had another reason for

[Mr. Tucker.]

so doing beyond that of recognizing the Legion's request and I hope he will reveal it to the house.

The next matter referred to in the legislation is the position of a widow whose veteran husband lived in Canada slightly less than 20 years. It did not matter how long she might have lived in Canada, she could not get the benefit of the War Veterans' Allowance Act after her husband's death if he had not resided here for 20 years or more before death.

The reduction in the residence qualification to 10 years is one which I think everyone will welcome but I would point out to the minister that in reducing the residence qualification to 10 years in this legislation he did only what was done this session already in the case of the other social welfare legislation affecting the recipients of old age assistance, blind pensions and old age security. As hon. members know people can receive old age security even though they may not be British subjects and may not have given the service to this country which our ex-servicemen may have given.

In reducing the residence qualification in this legislation to 10 years as has been the case in the other social welfare legislation what he is really doing is putting war veterans on the same basis of qualification as the recipients of social welfare who have no special claim as veterans have. In view of the attitude the minister adopted in the past when in opposition I am certain he will want to give some extra consideration to the veterans who served their country and to the dependents of veterans and putting them on exactly the same basis with those in receipt of social welfare could not have seemed to him generous, to say the least.

The next subject dealt with is the amount to be charged as income against a veteran in respect of a residence which he may own. The Canadian Legion has recommended that the value of the residence not to be so charged be placed at \$9,000 so that no interest on this sum should be counted as income. The bill before us proposes raising this amount to \$8,000. In view of the fact there has been a rise of approximately 187 per cent in the value of homes since the original amount was set at \$4,000 I feel that an increase to \$10,000 or \$11,000 might have been justified. I think the Legion was extremely reasonable in suggesting \$9,000 and I feel the minister should have gone at least that far. However, setting the value at \$8,000 will mean an increase of \$2,000 over the present amount and this will be helpful and, I am sure, appreciated.