

Supply—Veterans Affairs

Mr. Gregg: I stated that we were attempting to treat as applications all inquiries from those veterans regarding this matter; and if those applications were received before April 1 and later approved, the benefits would date from April 1. If they have been received after April 1, between April 1 and whatever date the bill receives the royal assent, we would take the date of inquiry or application as the starting time. But I also indicated that I should be glad to look into the whole question of applications and make sure that no avoidable hardship was experienced by the applicant.

Mr. Thomas: In other words, if an application were to be received by the minister or by the department today, then the benefits would not start as of the first of April but would start today. Is that correct?

Mr. Gregg: I want to make sure about the suggestion which was made here, that that applicant, through circumstances beyond his control, may have been unable to get that application in by the first of April. If he had wanted to make it and had been unable to do so, I should like to give it further consideration.

Mr. Thomas: That just brings up this point. On several occasions veterans have written to me with regard to the allowance. I wrote back to them and told them that the bill had not yet become law, that I did not feel that their applications would be acceptable at that time, but that I would notify them as soon as the bill became law. I would hate to think that I had "beat" somebody out of a couple of months' veterans allowance through an act of my own. It is no fault of theirs. It would be my own fault.

Mr. Gregg: Perhaps the hon. member would send me the original letter.

Mr. Fulton: I should like to ask the minister if he would outline for us the present duties of the director of public relations.

Mr. Gregg: The duties of the director of public relations are varied. He is, of course, head of the fairly modest public relations service in each of our districts. Our work, in many phases of the department, requires from time to time information to be passed on to the veteran's constituency. Sometimes it is the older group of veterans, sometimes it is the younger group. For instance, the matter we were discussing a few minutes ago, as soon as the bill receives the royal assent, would lend itself very well to public relations information going out.

Mr. Fulton: Showing how generous the minister is being?

[Mr. Thomas.]

Mr. Gregg: When I came to the department there was set up what might be called a house organ, a departmental periodical, which went to our own officers, to those settled on the land, to those in hospitals, to members of parliament, to senators and other people, setting out some of the rehabilitation efforts that were going forward, some of the results on the part of casualty training which is a story that needs to be told again and again not only because it has been a great asset to Canada but because of the effect in morale upon those veterans who have successfully, with the help of our medical people, hospitals and training personnel, brought themselves back as almost full-time productive citizens of Canada. It may be stated that sometimes *Veterans Affairs* had the minister's picture in it too often, but I can assure my hon. friend that an interdict went out with regard to that.

Mr. Fulton: I never would have suggested that.

An hon. Member: A good idea.

Mr. Gregg: But I am sure that he would be the first to agree with me that men and women who were accustomed to working in teams and were accustomed to taking a great pride in the achievements which they were able to produce, now that they have become scattered all across the country, do appreciate having information as to how their comrades are getting along. In reviewing *Veterans Affairs* some months ago, rather than have a monthly we asked ourselves if we could perhaps produce the same results by making it bi-monthly. And so it has been during, I think, the last six months, at a cost of some \$4,500. The work of the head of the public relations here, and his assistants across the country, is not only to carry out duties with regard to that publication, and to attempt to interpret the work fairly to the public, but particularly to attempt to interpret the part which the veterans themselves have played in their own rehabilitation, and the improvement of their physical condition in the hospitals. I think a great deal of good has been done on behalf of the whole effort.

Mr. Herridge: I notice what appears to be a new position in the details in connection with departmental administration. There is reference to a financial adviser to the deputy minister. Is that a new office? If so, what are the duties of the official?

Mr. Gregg: No, that is not a new office. I cannot explain why it was left out of the 1949-50 estimates, but I shall be glad to get that information.