

The Address—Mr. Brooks

They have suggested to the government a means of solving this problem easily. I believe it is the duty and responsibility of the government, if they are not going to increase the war veterans allowance at this session, to adopt the suggestion of the Legion as expressed in this brief.

There is another matter, Mr. Speaker, which I believe is to receive consideration during this session. It is to be dealt with without reference to a veterans affairs committee. We will not know how it will be dealt with until the legislation is brought before this house. The last issue of *The Legionary*, November 19, 1951, in an editorial entitled "Pension Increases on the Way", mentioned the fact that a letter was received by the dominion president of the Canadian Legion, Mr. Watts, from the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Lapointe), which stated:

The government's decision, arrived at after a great deal of thought, was that basic rates under the Pension Act should be revised—

Now, that is a very surprising statement, Mr. Speaker, that the government should have to take a great deal of thought to arrive at a decision that the basic rates of pension should be increased. This was obvious to every returned soldier across this country, and I believe to the great majority of people. It would not have been necessary for the people of Canada to take a great deal of thought to come to that conclusion. I am surprised that the minister makes such a statement. The letter continues:

—and I am glad to be able to inform you that I propose to introduce at this fall session the necessary legislation to implement the government's decision.

We are all glad to know that this consideration has been given. There is one point about which we are a little dubious, and that is whether the consideration will be such as will meet the requirements of the veterans. I was concerned, too, after reading a headline in the *Montreal Gazette* of Saturday which stated, "Rise in veterans' basic pension expected to be 15 to 20 per cent."

Mr. Knowles: They had better give it some more thought.

Mr. Brooks: As the hon. member says, they had better give it some more thought. The minister is not in his seat, and what the basis for the item in the *Gazette* is, I do not know. I want to say to the government that a 15 or 20 per cent increase is not enough. If they are only considering an increase of that amount, they are not doing justice to the veterans nor to themselves.

It is not necessary, as I have said on other occasions, to point out the two norms upon which the soldiers' pensions in this country

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were based. The first one was the cost of living in 1925 or 1926, and the other was the rate of ordinary wages at that time. The pensioner received one increase of 25 per cent in 1948. Since 1939 the cost of living in this country has increased about 190 per cent, and the wages paid ordinary labour in this country 260 per cent. In all reason, Mr. Speaker, if the pensions of veterans are based on those norms, how can this government justify an increase of only 15 or 20 per cent? How can this government justify themselves if they should only offer the pensioners an increase now from 15 per cent to 20 per cent? I hope that it is not true.

In his letter quoted in *The Legionary* the minister also mentioned the war veterans allowance, and I should like to quote from it:

It was agreed, however, that a parliamentary committee on veterans affairs should be set up as early as possible after the 1952 session opens in order to deal with this act. Changes subsequently could be made retroactive to the first of January, 1952, which is the general date for the putting into effect of the provisions of the new Old Age Security and Old Age Assistance acts.

What I wish you to follow carefully, Mr. Speaker, is the opinion of the editor in regard to that statement, and I quote his remarks:

It is regrettable that the government did not see fit to have a parliamentary committee set up to deal with war veterans allowance during the current fall session so that the increase, whatever it may be, could have helped to tide the recipients over the coming winter months when expenses are heaviest. The government having announced its decision, however, *The Legionary* can only express the fervent hope, which it feels sure all ex-service-men and women will share, that when the amount of the increase is determined, it will be sufficient to enable these gallant old defenders of Canada's freedom to spend their remaining years in reasonable comfort, free from the fear of want or outright poverty. Nothing less than that will satisfy their younger or more fortunately placed comrades—nor, we firmly believe, the citizens of this country generally.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I should like to mention an article or an advertisement which I saw in the *Ottawa Journal* a few days ago. It was a request for the purchase of poppies. The wording of this request appealed to me and I think it outlines extremely well the situation of the disabled veteran. I have one objection to the advertisement, if I may call it such. In it there is a picture of our war memorial at the top and it is called "the Ottawa war memorial". I am not going to quarrel greatly with that wording, but I would point out that this war memorial, of which we across Canada are all so proud, is not Ottawa's war memorial but is the national war memorial of Canada. We all across Canada helped to contribute towards its cost and, as I say, we are all extremely