

*Veterans Appeal Board*

● (1510)

*[English]*

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the New Democrats, particularly the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young), it is an honour to make this presentation in response to Bill C-66 and the comments of the Hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Hees).

I want to indicate why there is such a spirit of co-operation and willingness of all Members of the House to essentially break the Standing Orders to accommodate the Minister and Bill C-66. The Minister makes it a habit, in a true spirit of Parliament, of involving his critics in his decision-making and the processing of legislation. I know that the critic for the Liberal Party and my friend, the Hon. Member for Beaches, have always indicated on every occasion how much they appreciate working in co-operation with the Minister of Veterans Affairs to ensure that the lives of veterans are made as comfortable and positive as possible in our country.

If other Ministers, particularly other chairpersons of standing committees, operated in that same co-operative spirit, the business of this House would flow much more smoothly. It would be much more productive and the level and quality of parliamentary debate and discussion would be elevated. I hold up the Minister of Veterans Affairs as a model for his colleagues to follow.

Bill C-66 brings together the War Veterans Allowance Board and Pension Review Board under a new umbrella organization called the Veterans Appeal Board. We believe that it is an appropriate step at this time. We recognize that this particular initiative has been approved by the Royal Canadian Legion, other organizations representing veterans, and the National Council of Veterans Associations.

With their endorsement, we feel comfortable that now is the time to proceed with this as expeditiously as possible. We also recognize that there are improvements yet to be made to the War Veterans Allowance Act. The Minister has indicated his intention to bring forward amendments to the veterans' legislation in the fall, to further improve Canada's treatment of our veterans.

We look forward to continuing our co-operation with the Minister of Veterans Affairs to ensure that Canada's veterans are fully recognized for the sacrifice they made on our behalf.

We look forward to working co-operatively with the Minister when he brings forward his omnibus Bill which will essentially bring together as many as 27 different Acts that refer to the veterans who served Canada so gallantly in the past. We must never forget the contribution they made.

We appreciate being able to work with the Minister in such a co-operative way on behalf of Canada's veterans.

**Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate):** Mr. Speaker, I simply want to say that I am sure all Members would agree that the Minister has been doing an excellent job, along with

the official critics of both other Parties. The Minister has certainly been responsive to all MPs and the letters that have been written on behalf of veterans. It is certainly good to see such great co-operation between a Minister and Members of Parliament from both sides of the House, and the excellent manner in which the critic for the Official Opposition and the critic for the NDP have been able to work with the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Hees).

There is one point I want to make on a personal note, in dealing with problems of many constituents. Other Members have mentioned that they have experienced the same problem. It concerns the situation of a veteran who qualifies for a disability allowance and a judgment is made by the appeal board to pass a lump sum payment on to the veteran. If the veteran has received a pension from a private pension scheme all along, sometimes, as a result of the additional amount of money to be paid as a result of the judgment by the Veterans Appeal Board, the private pension firm wishes to recover some of the money the veteran has received over the years.

Perhaps by putting this on the record some way can be found to assist those veterans, some of whom have been involved in court battles with the private pension firms in this country. This could include paying their legal fees or assisting them in some way.

With those few words of appreciation to the Minister and critics of the other two Parties in the House on behalf of back-bench MPs, I will conclude my remarks.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

Motion agreed to, Bill read the second time and, by unanimous consent, considered in committee, reported, read the third time and passed.

● (1520)

**Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council):** I have just a brief point of order. The other day the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) made the point as the Speaker read through the various motions which are on the Order Paper, all having been stood by the Members, about that happening each day, and it occurred to me as the Chair went through 44 clauses of a Bill which had consent to clear all stages, that it was perhaps a little redundant to have the person in the chair—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** I think the Hon. Member should have raised the point at the time. It is redundant now.