

Mr. Evans: Mr. Speaker, that is the understanding that has been discussed, that we would not see the clock and that we would continue. Certainly the Government is of the view that this Bill should receive all three readings today and be passed into law. We would ask that you not see the clock but that we proceed with all stages of the Bill now before us. Upon completion of the Bill, we will proceed to Private Members' Hour and deal only with the Senate Private Members' Bill. Upon completion of all stages of that Bill, we will adjourn the House.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, we agreed with the proposal made by the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) and the Member who just spoke on behalf of the Government. We are prepared for the Chair not to see the clock until we have completed both Bills.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is sometimes difficult for the Chair not to see the many clocks in the Chamber. Is it agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is so ordered.

Mr. McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for its wisdom and generosity. I was speaking about the difficulty of disability pensioners. I can perhaps sum it up by saying that if their disability is 60 per cent, they are unable to get on the war veterans allowance, which in turn means that they cannot get the assistance allowance of up to \$6,000 per year which might permit them to remain in their own home, as they could if they were on war veterans allowance. It is a kind of Catch-22 situation. The disability keeps them from getting WVA, which in turn keeps them from getting the assistance that would allow them to maintain their own homes, which would be cheaper for us all in the long run.

The Minister made reference in his announcement to the upgraded services to be offered under the program. A transportation allowance can now be paid to a maximum of \$600 per year. What the Minister's announcement does not make clear is that all other maximum payments under the program remain fixed at the levels that were established in 1981. Statistics Canada figures for March, 1984 indicate that the dollar now has a purchasing power of 82.5 cents in comparison with the 1981 dollar. Veterans cannot pay 80 cents on the dollar for the home care or home modifications which they require.

There are some shortcomings in the Pension Act as a result of this which I would like to point out. Much has been made of the fact that this Bill amends the War Veterans Allowance Act to make it consistent with the Pension Act with regard to the treatment of dependent children and the right of veterans to legal counsel. No effort has been made to address other inconsistencies in these two pieces of legislation.

Under the War Veterans Allowance Act, the widow of a deceased veteran who had been receiving WVA at the married rate may continue to receive the allowance at this rate for a full year following the death of the veteran. This permits

War Veterans Allowance Act

sufficient time for a bereaved spouse to recover from the emotional shock of her loss. Many fixed expenses, particularly housing, cannot be easily adjusted in the space of a month. Other contractual arrangements which have been made for the care of the veteran can only be terminated without notice by the payment of a penalty.

The Pension Act, which governs the payment of disability pensions and other special allowances to veterans suffering from medical conditions related to their service, does not recognize the needs of newly bereaved widows. Under these provisions, any pension or allowance received by a disability pensioner ceases to be payable on the first day of the month following the death of the veteran. If the Minister were to have addressed the inconsistencies in these two Acts, he should have amended the Pension Act to ensure that the widows of disability pensioners receive the same consideration as the widows of war veterans allowance recipients.

We would like to see the full disability pension of the veteran continued for a year following his death in those cases. Similarly, we would continue the attendance or the exceptional incapacity allowance received by some of the most severely disabled veterans for a full year following the death of the veteran.

Another amendment of the Pension Act which we would have liked the Minister to have included in this package, and this is very important, would entrench the principle that the 100 per cent rate of disability pension should reflect parity with the average wage of five unskilled categories of public servants or the increase in the consumer price index, whichever is greater.

In 1972, there was mutual agreement by a joint government-veterans committee established by the Minister of Veterans Affairs that the disability pension at basic single rates would be tied to a composite of five unskilled categories of public servants' rates of pay. Since then the Government has passed legislation increasing the basic rate effective July 1, 1973 and July 1, 1978, aligning it with the average of these five categories. However, this is not enshrined in the legislation and the veterans have to come cap in hand to get it each time that they have fallen behind, often quite a distance; it has been up to \$600 per year.

As far as the Dieppe veterans are concerned, we had hoped the Minister would include a provision in the Bill to increase the allowance payable to those Canadian veterans captured at Dieppe who were imprisoned for years under extraordinarily harsh conditions. We would like it raised to 40 per cent of the full disability pension. The Minister, and many other Members of this House, are aware of the studies by Mr. Justice Thane A. Campbell in 1953 and Dr. J. Douglas Hermann in 1973 which described the conditions endured by the Dieppe veterans. Now the Dieppe veterans are forced to demonstrate on Parliament Hill in an effort to make their needs known to the Government. The Progressive Conservative members in this House recognize the needs of these veterans and condemn the Minister for his failure to address this important matter.