

*Veterans Affairs***VETERANS AFFAIRS**AMENDMENT OF STANDING ORDERS TO PROVIDE
FOR STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. P. E. Wright (Melfort) moved:

That standing order 63 be amended by inserting therein immediately after subsection (1) the following new subsection:

(m) on veterans affairs, to consist of 35 members, 10 of whom shall constitute a quorum.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it hardly seems necessary for me to speak to this motion which in effect would set up a permanent veterans affairs committee of the house. The necessity for such action is quite evident from resolutions passed by the Canadian Legion over the past number of years. In almost every presentation they have made to the veterans affairs committee they have asked for a permanent committee. The veterans affairs committee played a very prominent part in drawing up the veterans' charter which parliament passed after the last war, and I believe it was of great help to the government in so doing. That was natural, because on that committee there have always been members who were veterans and who from past experience have been able to give ideas and suggestions to the government in the preparation of veterans' legislation for the house.

It was because of the veterans on the veterans' affairs committee that the new act dealing with land settlement was so much better than the old Soldier Settlement Act that we had after the first war, and which the house has been discussing tonight. It was due to the suggestions of veterans on the veterans affairs committee that housing projects for veterans were initiated after the last war and the small holdings scheme brought into operation. It was due to the suggestions made by the veterans affairs committee to the government that much of the legislation in the veterans' charter was placed there. Therefore I feel that a permanent veterans affairs committee would be of great assistance to the government in seeing that the purpose for which the legislation was passed is carried out in the administration thereof.

As time goes on the administration sometimes gets farther and farther away from the intent and purpose for which acts were passed. After some five or ten years the people administering such legislation forget the purposes and objectives underlying its passage, and I am sure that a veterans affairs committee of the house dealing with these matters from year to year would be able to see that the intention behind the various pieces of legislation in the veterans charter was carried out. Only with a permanent veterans affairs committee that can keep the

administration of the legislation close to the needs of veterans are we going to get the kind of administration that we should have.

Take, for instance, the war veterans' allowance. At the present time there is a payment of \$50 a month to a single man and \$90 a month to a married man, with an allowable earned income over and above that of \$120 per year. Surely no one can argue that is enough for a veteran to live on. Surely the allowable earned income should be greater than it is at the present time. Surely the \$50 and \$90 should be raised to at least \$60 and \$120, and we should allow our veteran whatever he may be able to earn over and above that amount. These are matters which should be dealt with by a permanent veterans affairs committee.

Over the past number of years the government has seen fit to set up veterans affairs committees approximately every second or third year to deal with legislation which they proposed to bring before the house in the form of amendments to the various pieces of veterans' legislation. These committees are set up for a specific purpose, and are not able to deal with the general veterans' legislation. The discussion in the committee is held to the matters which are referred directly to that committee, and we are not able to bring forward many of the suggestions that we, as members, have from our own organizations in the country or from individual veterans as to how the administration of the veterans' charter could be improved.

As I said, as time goes on there are going to be more difficulties in the administration of the veterans' charter. The people administering it are not as sympathetic as they were when the acts were first passed. At that time most of the men who were holding administrative positions in the department were veterans themselves, and were in immediate contact with their comrades. As time goes on they become civil servants rather than the representatives of the veterans.

Mr. Mutch: Will the hon. gentleman permit a question? Is he suggesting that the interpretation and administration of the veterans' charter has suffered by a lessening of the community of interest between the officials of D.V.A. and the veterans?

Mr. Wright: I am saying that has been the tendency in the past. Certainly that is what happened between the first world war and the second world war. I am saying that that tendency in the Department of Veterans Affairs will grow unless we have a permanent committee of this house. I believe it is quite evident to the hon. member who has just