

the veterans of Canada. Perhaps this should have been given in the past. We would have been glad had this happened in the past. Nevertheless, when one is considering what should be done, one must keep two things in mind. First, we must remember that the veterans of Canada are number one, and second we must consider how much the taxpayers can afford to give in order to have happy veterans, which presumably we will have as a result of the implementation of this bill.

● (8:20 p.m.)

I suggest most respectfully, Mr. Speaker, that members of the opposition are whistling Dixie when they try to be critical of this bill. I was impressed this afternoon by the reference of one opposition member to the 100 per cent pensioners who have severe disabilities, for example, the paraplegics. I remember very well a lad who had been wounded in Korea. He was an absolute physical wreck. When he attended our meetings, he sat beside me. I gave him a cup of coffee. I had to hold it to his lips because he was unable to hold it himself. No one can be too sad in such a case. Here is a young man who has given his all for his country. The question, however, is how much money one can pay to such a man. If we gave him \$1 million, would he take it? I am sure not one member of this House would change places with that boy for \$1 million. Obviously, we cannot give it to him in any event. Therefore, in my opinion we must arrive at a respectable figure for those who are totally disabled. It must be a figure which will allow them to provide for themselves food and drink, the very best housing, an automobile and all the comforts of life. By this legislation which is being introduced by the Minister of Veterans Affairs I am sure they will be in a position to afford these things.

After all, these veterans are to receive an increase of 10 per cent in their basic pension, and it has been suggested they receive an extra \$800 to \$2,400 a year provided that money is needed. I believe this is good, common sense. I have examined this bill very carefully. I appreciate what has been said about the committee. I appreciate that veterans representing many organizations appeared before the committee which met on many days over a period of many weeks. As has been said, they became part of us. In my opinion, they and the members of the committee did an excellent job. We all realize we cannot give too much to a veteran, but because of the increases suggested in Bill C-203 I, along with other veterans of Canada, agree with the editor of *The Legion* that this legislation is a great step forward.

Mr. Marshall: Mr. Speaker, I should like to remind my hon. friend, who referred to German veterans receiving only 30 per cent of what Canadians receive, that they do not deserve .03 per cent because of the hardship they inflicted upon many people and because of the six million people who were destroyed—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is debate; it is not a point of order.

Mr. J. Chester MacRae (York-Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, I should like to enter this debate because of its importance

Pension Acts

to me and to the veterans of Canada. I was very pleased to see that the first item of government business for this session was to be Bill C-203. I wish to join our distinguished colleague from Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) who regretted that it had taken so long for this legislation to be brought before the House. I do not entirely blame the minister for this. I think he would have been very pleased to introduce the legislation long before this date.

The veterans affairs committee of this House of Commons has been a good committee. I have been a member of it for 13 years. The committee which studied this matter for 16 months was an especially good committee which had a very good chairman. I think we worked together very well. But it is 16 months since we began our study of the Woods commission report. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre mentioned, as I believe others have, that the 10 per cent pension increase which is to come into effect on April 1 should be retroactive. I believe the government somehow or other should find the funds with which to make payment to our veterans retroactive to last October or, preferably, for a full year.

I am particularly interested in clause 1A of the bill which provides as follows:

The provisions of this act shall be liberally construed and interpreted to the end that the recognized obligation of the people and government of Canada to provide compensation to those members of the forces who have been disabled or have died as a result of military service, and to their dependants, may be fulfilled.

There is this statement in the explanatory notes:

—The purpose of this amendment is to make clear—

That is, to the Parliament of Canada, to the government of Canada and to the Pension Commission.

—the purpose of the Pension Act and to give guidance to those persons charged with its administration.

I feel this section is well worded. I was interested to see that clauses 57 and 58 in part IV of the bill deal specifically with Hong Kong veterans. We have been promising this particular aid and recognition for a long time. The plight of those who served in Japanese prison camps was more devastating than that of most of us who served in World War I or World War II. It has been said that civilization is just a coat of paint. That was especially true between 1932 and 1945 in Germany, when under Hitler there was the greatest tyranny the world has ever seen. The genocide of six million Jews is one of the blackest chapters in the history of mankind. Civilization was also shown to be just a coat of paint by the Japanese treatment of Chinese, Australian, New Zealand, United States and Canadian prisoners. There is very little parallel in history.

I was glad to see that recently—we all have received this publication—a national association of war prisoners was formed. Now that our Hong Kong prisoners have received some measure of recognition, I think we might very well direct our attention to the men who served in prisoner of war camps in other than the