

*Pension Act and Other Acts*

situation which reflects the fact that in the month of April veterans were already getting the extra \$2.70 or the extra \$5.40 if married? I am sure I have made things sufficiently complicated that the minister does not know what answer to give. The point I am making is this: I think the veterans should be given the best possible advantage from this legislation. They should really get both the additional \$15 or \$30, which the Minister of National Health and Welfare provides in Bill C-270, and they should get the additional 3.6 per cent, not just of the \$16 or the \$26 they are drawing, but of the \$121 or the \$201 available as a war veterans allowance.

I do not wonder that the minister said the other day he could not undertake that these cheques could be adjusted by the end of June. I do not wonder that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) should have said today that the old age security cheques could be adjusted but that he was not sure about war veterans cheques. However, I hope that if we can get this legislation passed quickly the cheques can be adjusted by the end of June. Even if there is some delay, though, let the order in council be properly drawn and the adjustment be properly made so that the veterans may get the benefit of both increases, not just 93 cents and 57 cents, but the benefit of 3.6 per cent of the maximum total available under the allowance plus the amount available under the amendment to the old age security legislation and the guaranteed income supplement.

I could go on, but I believe it is unnecessary for me to do so. Like many other members of the House I have been through this too often—I have too often seen increases for veterans partially reduced because of a means test or income test in various pieces of legislation. One of the biggest hoaxes we ever saw around here was the provision in connection with the guaranteed income supplement that moneys received by way of war veterans pensions or allowances would not count as income against the supplement. It sounded good, Mr. Speaker. But then whoever was responsible for the administration of war veterans allowances declared that any money received by way of guaranteed income supplement did count against income received by WVA recipients. It is that kind of a mix-up that the minister has inherited. I hope he will sort it out in the most generous way possible. I am relying on the minister's statement the other day that the government will seek an order in council to correct the situation. I urge him to see that it does. I hope that the fact it is to be sought means that it has not been finally drawn, and that after this discussion of the matter the minister's officials will take a good look at the question to make sure that there is as full an increase as possible for war veterans allowance recipients.

• (1600)

I am about through with the remarks I wanted to make at this stage, Mr. Speaker. Again I express my thanks to the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) and his colleagues for letting me go first the other day when their spokesmen happened not to be here and the bill was called rather suddenly. I am not going to take advantage of the rule that permits the first opposition speaker unlimited time; that does not often happen to us and we are not in the habit of making use of that rule.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

However, before I sit down I just want to say that I still think that an area where we could and ought to start establishing the principle of a guaranteed annual income is with our veterans. The very fact that we have these many complications to which I have referred adds urgency to this plea. I think parliament has done well over the years by having provided in the Pension Act pensions for disability. Parliament also recognized that there are veterans who served and came back to Canada without any pensionable disabilities, yet were burnt out, had suffered, and deserved consideration from the parliament and the people of Canada. Therefore, we provided the War Veterans Allowance Act as a companion piece to the Pension Act. We have over 50,000 veterans today benefitting from the War Veterans Allowance Act, some on pension as well, many not. I think over 30,000 widows and other dependants also receive payments under the War Veterans Allowance Act. So, parliament's heart has been in the right place and this legislation has been a good thing. Nevertheless, the more complications develop, the more it seems to me to make good sense to set the age at 55 and to have a reasonable figure of at least \$3,000 a year single and at least \$4,500 a year married and to say: "This is a guaranteed income which we will provide for our veterans". This would cut through all this business about 57 cents and 93 cents, and all the other technicalities and difficulties which we have with us in this legislation.

I fully agree with the statement that my near neighbour, the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert), made the other day about the responsibility of the parliament and people of Canada to our veterans. This is a responsibility that a member like the hon. member for Edmonton West, who himself served in World War II, feels very strongly. Those of us who did not happen to serve feel it with equal, perhaps even greater force. That is why I believe we should put this proposal into effect.

May I say again that I welcome the tone of what the minister said on Friday. He did not say all the last words; there are a few more things to do. However, I urge very strongly that he use the remaining time that he has as a cabinet minister in this important portfolio to see to it that the commitment to adjust the basic rates is carried out. I also urge him to use his remaining time to see to it that the process of awarding pensions is speeded up, and that a still better escalation formula is found.

Finally, I plead with him as strongly as I can, as one who is pretty close to his generation, that we give a great deal of thought to our old soldiers, the World War I survivors—though, mind you, many of the World War I survivors are now getting on in years—and make sure that they get the kind of deal they deserve. I feel that this deal will be best met if we establish for all veterans who are 55 years of age and over a guaranteed annual income and for all, whatever their age, full and adequate recognition of their service to this country.

**Mr. William Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand):** Mr. Speaker, I should first apologize for my absence on Friday when this bill was unexpectedly introduced into the House following the conclusion of the second reading of the bill to amend the Old Age Security Act and the guaranteed income supplement. I am quite agreeable to the arrangement that was made at the suggestion of the hon. member