

and in the Veterans Affairs committee concerning other improvements which might be made in the War Veterans Allowance Act have not fallen on deaf ears. These and other matters are receiving our careful study and attention.

There have been many statements made in recent days in this House concerning the men and women who served Canada in her time of need. I do not think I can add anything to that which has already been said, except that I believe this bill is another step forward in honouring the pledge made by the then Prime Minister of Canada when he spoke to the Canadian troops on the eve of their historic attack on Vimy Ridge in April 1917. The then Prime Minister said:

The government and the country will consider it their first duty to see that a proper appreciation of your effort and of your courage is brought to the notice of the people at home and it will always be our endeavour to so guide the attitude of public opinion that the country will support the government to prove to the returned men its just and due appreciation of the inestimable value of the services rendered to the country and empire and that no man, whether he goes back or whether he remains in Flanders, will have just cause to reproach the government for having broken faith with the men who won and the men who died.

Actions speak louder than words. Bill C-148 is indicative of this government's intention to live up to that promise made over 50 years ago on behalf of all Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, in view of the type of comment being bandied back and forth in this House, I hope hon. members will not become too suspicious of the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald), the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and me. However, it is the result of co-operation and the realization of the job for which we are responsible. I hope hon. members appreciate the fact that one part of our umbrella of legislation is dealt with in a co-operative and statesman-like manner. I think that most comments were made on Bill C-148, to amend the War Veterans Allowance Act, during the second reading. We want to get this bill through all stages. There is agreement among all parties that we will get it through with the least possible delay.

The minister indicated that the representations we have made will not fall on deaf ears. Therefore, I want to repeat that there are three amendments I would have liked to see. I believe they are necessary to finally resolve the fate of our veterans who qualify for the benefits under this section of the Pension act. Although the amendments under Bill C-148 are most acceptable to my party, as well as to all veterans organizations across this country, the government could very easily have included these other amendments. The three issues of concern to veterans and to which no reference is made in the bill are as follows.

The first would be the removal of the Canadian residence requirement for applicants abroad. This would involve amending Section 3(1) of the War Veterans Allowance Act. Under this section, it is possible for a veteran to qualify for an allowance by returning to Canada and remaining for one year. The benefit is subsequently continued, even though the recipient may take up permanent residence outside the country. This 365 day residence

War Veterans Allowance Act

requirement may not cause undue difficulty to veterans residing in the border areas of the United States, but such a procedure is more difficult for veterans residing in far off countries such as the United Kingdom or in Europe.

The benefits became payable out of Canada through an amendment to the act in 1960. This permits continuing payment of the allowance outside Canada, primarily for the benefit of the recipient desirous of leaving Canada for reasons of health or family ties. As of January 31, 1973, there were only 709 persons outside of Canada who were receiving allowances. An amendment to the legislation removing the 12 month residence qualifications would extend the benefit of the allowance to Canadian veterans who are unable to return here in order to qualify. The Department of Veterans Affairs has adequate facilities to administer payments to veterans in the United Kingdom and in western Europe. The removal of the personal and property ceilings under the amendments before us today will further ease these administrative burdens. I again ask the minister, and I know he agrees because he expressed this view at the committee stage of the bill, that every effort be extended to further amend the act to satisfy these veterans.

The second would be an addition to provide for the recognition of a child over 21 years under Section 12(2). This would enable a surviving spouse to receive an allowance for the dependent child attending a recognized educational institution, even though that child may have reached his or her 21st birthday. As I stated on second reading, this allowance should be payable to age 25 or until the child ceases to attend an institute. The Children of War Dead (Education Assistance) Act provides, through recent amendments, for benefits to continue beyond a child's 21st birthday. The number in this instance would be small. I know the minister feels as I do, that this amendment would provide a good amount of relief to the surviving spouse, in view of the continuing high costs, and to the child to maintain his education, particularly with the high unemployment rate in this age category in the country today.

The third amendment which should be treated with the highest priority is that having to do with service in the United Kingdom in World War I. In spite of efforts by veterans organizations over the years to have the 365 day requirement eliminated and to have the service in the United Kingdom before November 12, 1918 accepted as a qualifying service, for some reason or other no consideration has been given to this suggestion. I note that some years ago the former member for Swift Current-Maple Creek, I think it was, introduced a private member's bill proposing this amendment, but as a result of the passive attention paid to private member's bills in this House, his efforts did not get far. I can only repeat that such a change would not affect many of our veterans, since so many of them are in their late seventies and in receipt of old age security benefits. So, the cost would be small. It would, however, bring them a degree of additional comfort by providing drugs and medical appliances not presently available to them.

• (1550)

Action along these lines would also show recognition for veterans who offered to serve anywhere for their country