

1944 this was increased to \$360 and it is now proposed to make a further increase to \$480 per year.

Amendment 10 is a much needed amendment to meet a few special cases. I will give hon. members an example. A South African veteran in receipt of 100 per cent pension died but his widow was not eligible for an award under British ministry regulations. This amendment will establish equality for all Canadians who served with the Canadian contingents in the South African war on the same basis as those who served in world wars I and II.

In the case of amendments 11 and 12, the former is mainly administrative.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am sorry to interrupt the minister, but on second reading of a bill only the principle should be discussed. I suggest that if the minister wishes to cover the amendments he just mention them rather than discuss them in detail.

Mr. BENTLEY: If it is within the right of the house to give unanimous consent for the minister to continue to do what he is doing, I suggest that it be given.

Mr. BLACKMORE: I would like to have the minister proceed as he has planned to proceed, because he is doing a good job.

Mr. SPEAKER: I suggest to the minister and to the house that the rules should be followed. There will be an opportunity in committee to discuss the bill clause by clause. Only the principle of the bill should be discussed on second reading, otherwise we shall be exposing ourselves to having discussion twice of the same subject.

Mr. BLACKMORE: Could not Your Honour make an exception in this particular case, inasmuch as the minister is ready to make his speech?

Mr. GREGG: I shall be glad to comply with your ruling, sir, and to resume before the parliamentary committee the giving of the information with respect to the amendments.

Mr. KNOWLES: On the point of order, may I point out that it has been more or less agreed that once second reading has been given this bill it will be referred to the committee on veterans affairs, after which it comes back to the committee of the whole. As there is so much interest in this matter perhaps unanimous consent might be noted by Your Honour and the minister permitted to proceed.

Mr. ROWE: The Speaker's ruling is not debatable.

Mr. SPEAKER: Hon. members will realize that if unanimous consent is given to do this the house will be exposing itself to a discussion of the clauses of the bill when it is up for second reading. I suggest to hon. members that as this bill is to be referred to a committee and then brought back to the committee of the whole house it would be preferable if the minister and the house would abide by the rules and discuss only the principle of the bill.

Mr. GREGG: I think the situation might be met if in my further remarks I covered certain points which hon. members have in mind.

As intimated by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) in the house on February 16, these increases will, to a greater or lesser degree, affect about 400,000 beneficiaries under the Pension Act, and with the co-operation of the house it is hoped to get the adjustment cheques in the mail by the end of this month.

The March pension cheque will be on the present scale and will be issued on the regular date. It is planned that the adjustment cheque will be a separate one and will practically be the equivalent of one month's pension. With that done as indicated, regular monthly pension cheques will be able to reflect monthly increases starting April 30 and continue in regular order from then on.

During the course of the debate last Monday the hon. member for Royal (Mr. Brooks) proposed that there should be a standing committee of the house on veterans affairs, and subsequent speakers endorsed the proposal. I know the suggestion is not a new one, but it is one which I as a newcomer would like to consider. In the light of the experience to be gained in the committee which is now set up I hope to be in a much better position to form an opinion later on in the session.

The hon. member for Weyburn (Mr. McKay) stated:

Pensions and allowances still remain at the basic rate which was struck in 1926.

Actually the present pension scale was established in 1920 when a bonus of 50 per cent was added to the basic rate and the cost of living index for July of that year was 150.6.

Mr. BROOKS: The minister says the cost of living index was 150; what was the basic year?

Mr. GREGG: That was 1920.

Mr. BROOKS: What year was 100?

Mr. GREGG: I cannot answer that question but I shall try to get the answer. The bonus was continued at the same rate until 1925 when it was included in the basic rate and it has remained unchanged.