

Veterans Allowance Increases

Another area which gave us a great deal of concern was those veterans suffering from severe and multiple disabilities. The white paper contained a set of proposals with regard to this. The proposals in the white paper were misunderstood in some quarters. There were representations to us to the effect that a means test was required. I certainly did not read that into the white paper. The minister expressly repudiated that anything like this was intended. Without question, the committee made it clear that the case for additional allowances for certain categories of multiple and severely disabled veterans above and beyond the 100 per cent basic rate was a strong case.

The hon. member who moved this motion in very emotional terms stated the debt that Canada owes to those who served. There is no greater debt owed by a nation than that owed to those who served a nation and suffered physically, emotionally and mentally. Many of our veterans have had many trials and tribulations. The committee made some recommendations which went above and beyond those in the white paper.

The report we presented was in two sections. We listed those recommendations of the Woods Committee with which we were in general agreement and those in which we were not in agreement. We stated our reasons and, in some cases, suggested modifications. The committee completed its report and presented it to this House in June. It was unanimously adopted by resolution of this House. I was pleased to see a reference in the Speech from the Throne to legislation that will be introduced. When the minister speaks on this subject he will be able to say much more than I can say.

A great deal of attention has been given to the recommendations of the committee by various organizations, the minister and his department. It has been the source of a good deal of pleasure to note in the August issue of the *Legion*, the national magazine of the Royal Canadian Legion, that the cover featured photographs of the committee members. The editorial that follows is very complimentary. I will not quote it in detail. It reads in part:

—the report has the unanimous concurrence of the House of Commons and we assume that the next step will be for the Minister of Veterans Affairs to seek Cabinet approval of the report, following which officials of the Department of Justice can set to work preparing the necessary legislation.

The editorial is a very realistic appreciation of the steps in the legislative process. There is a very quiet, confident note in the editorials of the *Legion* and publications of other veterans organizations. It is a clear appreciation of the good will that has been displayed. This good will has not been marred by partisan behaviour in the committee. I am confident there will be a general acceptance of the program to be introduced.

I wish to quote from the latest issue of the war amputees *Fragment*. The remarks in this article concerning the report of the committee are particularly complimentary. Perhaps it would be better if some other hon. member repeated them. It reads in part:

The 1969-70 Parliamentary Committee can take its place, right along with the renowned Veterans Affairs Committees of the

[Mr. Francis.]

past. It was the task of this Committee...to take the raw material of the Woods Report, measure it against the Government's own White Paper on Veterans Pensions, add in the rather well-documented views of the Veterans organizations, and come up with a proposed plan which would meet the need.

There is every indication, in spite of the fact the committee turned down some of the key recommendations such as age escalation, that these organizations are generally pleased with the work of the committee. The question we must now ask ourselves is, what is to be the pattern? What is it reasonable to expect?

On Friday of last week we completed the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. Other national emergency measures were brought before this House which were the subject of special debate. I know that time can pass in the course of a session without us really being aware of it. I say to the members of this House that the veterans of this country can have complete confidence in the measures being prepared and brought forward for legislative enactment. From the statements made by members opposite, this matter will not be prolonged in a partisan debate. Members will work in the spirit in which the work was carried out in the committee and they will be pleased to approve this legislation.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, we are delighted that this day in the House of Commons is being devoted to a discussion of veterans affairs, and I take much pleasure in commending the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) for having introduced the motion which we are now debating. If I might say so, I could not have drawn it better myself. But having said that, I must indicate that at the end of my remarks I intend to move an amendment to make it slightly better than it is.

● (3:20 p.m.)

I go along with the remarks which have been made by both the previous speakers concerning the excellence of the work of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. I have had a fair amount of committee experience over the years in this place and I have served on no committee I have enjoyed more. We had matters of real substance to deal with, we found dedication and devotion on the part of all members of the committee, and I believe that as a result of our work and co-operation we produced a report which, in the end, was better than I had hoped at the start might come out of that committee. May I say in this connection that it was precisely because of the unanimity we felt in that committee concerning all the important phases of our work, and because of the unanimity on many points at all stages—the Woods Report, the white paper, the committee report—that I regret there has been so long a delay in implementing those things upon which we were agreed.

I look upon the introduction of this motion today by the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe as primarily a way of speeding things up. If as a result of today's debate the minister can announce that the legislation will be on the order paper within the next few days,