

*Supply—Veteran's Affairs*

another group in my department which is dealing specifically with pension rates.

Of course the minister has dealt with this in his earlier remarks. The letter and the statement by the minister continue:

I can assure the hon. member and the house that if the report does not come to hand in the fairly near future we shall perhaps have to consider making some adjustment in pension rates in the interim period. I am hoping the report will be to hand in time for this to be avoided, and for an adjustment to be made consistent with some logical basis."

Over five months have passed since the minister's statement, yet the government remains silent.

Mr. MacBeath's letter goes on:

It is highly regrettable that this seemingly insensitive attitude of the federal government does not enable the war disabled and the dependents of those who died to share fully in the glories of our centennial year.

The Royal Canadian Legion is being forced to the conclusion that the men whose sacrifices in war made our centennial possible have been forgotten. We would appreciate tangible evidence that this is not so.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I should like to say that I hope the Prime Minister, the members of the government and especially the Minister of Veterans Affairs will take this letter of Mr. MacBeath's to heart, as well as the protests of the Royal Canadian Legion and the protests of the hundreds of thousands of veterans, so that something will be done for this very special class of citizen very very soon.

**Mr. Herridge:** Mr. Chairman, under the circumstances I do not intend to take up too much of the time of the house. First of all, I must say I am sure all members of the house, particularly the members of the standing committee on veterans affairs, are interested to hear that the Woods Report is in the minister's hands. I trust that this report soon will be referred to the standing committee so that its contents can be considered as well as representations from the various organizations.

I must say that the minister's reply with regard to the possibility of an increase in pensions was disappointing. I am sure it will be disappointing to the members of the Royal Canadian Legion and other veterans' organizations just as it is to the members of this house and the members of the standing committee on veterans affairs who, I am very pleased to say, throughout the years have treated this question on a non-partisan basis. We have met together during the committee

[Mr. MacRae.]

sessions and have discussed various questions related to pension rates, war veterans allowances, the administration of the Veterans Land Act, and so on, in a completely non-partisan manner. I believe this is indicated by the report the committee made to the house earlier this year when dealing with the question of the complaints of the Hong Kong veterans. I think that, generally speaking, the members of the committee were pleased with the efficient manner in which the officials of the Canadian Pension Commission dealt with this subject by reviewing all these cases.

I must say, however, that the minister's statement tonight was a great disappointment to many of us. I am sure it was a disappointment even to the chairman of the standing committee on veterans affairs in view of his strong plea before the house prior to the adjournment for an increase in these pension and war veterans allowance rates. The hon. member who just spoke quoted from an editorial in the *Canadian Legionary* of September. I will not repeat what he had to say. I do wish, however, to quote the remainder of that editorial which is entitled, "How Much Longer?":

To some these may seem strong words. They are, and justifiably so. If the Prime Minister and the Minister of Veterans Affairs will re-read the latter's statements in *Hansard* since the wholly inadequate and purely "interim" 15 per cent increase last November, they must understand why the Legion is frustrated, apprehensive and deeply disappointed.

There have been too many vague explanations and half-promises, and it is high time that action followed words. Obviously, the "logical basis" mentioned by Mr. Teillet has not yet been found and, as the "fairly near future" to which he referred has long since passed, the least the government can do during the coming session is to implement the D.V.A. minister's assurance that a further "interim" increase will be granted.

The fact that Prime Minister Pearson made no mention at his press conference of any such legislation being contemplated for the fall session is disturbing in the extreme. How much longer must our war disabled wait?

I am sure those sentiments have the support of a good majority of the members of this house regardless of party. I am sure the disappointment will be reflected in the minds of many veterans and their dependents across Canada at this time and all those in Canada who are interested in seeing that the veterans receive just treatment. I am sure all of us look forward to a later statement on this very important issue which we trust the minister will make in the very near future.

During my brief remarks I should like to make a reference to the visit by the members