

briefs, demonstrations and pleas. Would it not be feasible to reconsider additional funds plus backdating of the supplements for these few?— We, the undersigned, feel that at least the amount recommended by the Commons Committee would enable a quadriplegic to live on a comparable basis to the paraplegic.

This letter is signed by four quadriplegics, Mr. Speaker. One of the signees was a veteran by the name of T. Damiano, who appeared before the Veterans Affairs committee. He is the only one I recognize, but I will not forget him too easily. I hope that he will forgive me if I remind those veterans of the committee who sit here in this House that he was brought in in a wheelchair. He had no legs, and two uncontrollable stumps for arms as a result of wounds suffered in the Korean war. He should be wheeled into the House of Commons, Mr. Speaker, and placed before the cabinet to see the condition of some of those we so easily forget.

One of the headlines that I noticed in a magazine indicated that we were taking a great step forward. I say this headline should have read, "It's About Time We Took a Step Forward." But another headline explains the situation more clearly. It reads, "Amendments to the Pension Act—The Most Extensive Improvements in Half a Century." It has taken us 50 years to realize the needs of the war veterans of this country. Should we be so proud of ourselves, Mr. Speaker? Each and every one of us is responsible.

I hope especially that members of all past governments, who might take the time to reflect on what has happened over the past 50 years, are satisfied that they have done their job conscientiously. I hope I will not hear the same tale of woe in subsequent speeches concerning how much it would cost, or that we would have to raise taxes to increase benefits for the poor and disabled. As I said in my speech on December 2, I cannot accept that ridiculous explanation.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the increases are satisfactory and should be acceptable in the majority of cases. On April 1 the 100 per cent disability pensioner will receive some \$4,464 per year if he is married, and his single counterpart will receive \$2,640 per year. Provision is now made for an increased clothing allowance to those in receipt of pension on account of two amputations, and a special allowance to a pensioner whose disability requires the wearing of specially made wearing apparel. Special pension status will be granted to former prisoners of the Japanese, those who were captured in Hong Kong in 1941. But please note, Mr. Speaker, this is almost 30 years later. There are, in addition, amendments to authorize automatic pensions for widows and for orphans of these veterans.

Another amendment will authorize payment of special allowance to 100 per cent pensioners who are exceptionally incapacitated, but still qualifying conditions are inserted whereby authority will be vested in a new, completely independent five-man pension review board. A new definition of the benefit of doubt clause will provide a guide for applicants, advocates and adjudicators in the preparation and the processing of pension claims. Other amendments will provide for payment of

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additional pensions to those suffering consequential disabilities, and will provide for the payment of additional pensions to those in receipt of a pension for the loss of a paired organ or limb, and of an additional pension for the loss of the pair of those organs or limbs. There is also an amendment to extend from 12 months to three years the period for which a pension may be granted retroactively.

There are amendments to establish a bureau of pensions advocates outside of the Department of Veterans Affairs and for the establishment of two new boards for the hearing of appeals, namely, an entitlement board and a pension review board, as well as for new procedures for the making and hearing of applications for awards to clarify certain provisions of the Pension Act. I also welcome the minister's announcement about the Board of Legal Services, and I hope that this will speed up consideration of applications.

No, Mr. Speaker, I have no quarrel with the recommended increases. These were deliberated over many months by the Veterans Affairs Committee in a non-partisan manner which does all members credit. But I can only say that, unfortunately, they have been recommended too late for many who have passed on before this time.

It is the intention of my party to avoid delay in the passage of Bill C-203 and, in spite of the many shortcomings which could be pointed out, it is our intention to get the bill before committee as quickly as possible so that we may get on with the other stages before enactment.

I am sure we all agree that time is of the essence in the rationalization of the many administrative details which must be worked out so that veterans will receive the benefits afforded by April of this year. There are still many discrepancies in the over-all legislation which must be corrected. There are still many areas where the bill falls short of the expectations of the veterans as recommended by the veterans organizations, the Woods Committee and the Veterans Affairs Committee.

If I seem to be parochial in my comments, Mr. Speaker, I hope the House will bear with me while I spend a few moments to present a plea on behalf of the newest province of Canada, my home province of Newfoundland. Under the terms of confederation in 1949, many of Newfoundland's veterans were left hanging in the air because of the peculiar circumstances of their service. Out of a population of 500,000—and at the time of hostilities it was a good deal less—as of October, 1970, there were 1,990 war veterans receiving war veterans allowances and 1,633 receiving civilian war allowances, or a total of 3,623. Some 1,540 are receiving disability pension, and there are 350 who are dependent pensioners.

I am sure hon. members will note that even at today's population figures, over 10 per cent of the Newfoundland population served their country in time of war. It should be clear, then, that I am not being overly forceful when I say it becomes obvious that those who arranged the terms of confederation were not too familiar with the