

*Adjournment Debate*

Over the years, veterans' organizations have supplied the department with both problems and solutions. On one hand, the Liberal Government has quickly overlooked many of these recommendations, stating that they are not feasible or, because of financial restraint, are impossible. On the one hand, the Secretary of State has publicized his intention to make Canada a French state, regardless of cost. For the Liberal Government to financially endorse this commitment and blatantly ignore the heroes who defended this country is atrocious. The logic behind this policy is repulsive.

● (1825)

My Conservative colleagues and I feel that veterans deserve better treatment, and a step in the right direction would be to amend the War Veterans Allowance Act as quickly as possible. We are therefore requesting that this Act be revised on the return of the House in September. This would provide ample time for the Minister and his Department to draft the necessary changes to this legislation. Furthermore, this legislation can be passed through all stages in one hour. There is no valid reason for veterans to wait any longer for these necessary revisions to be made.

**Mr. Roland de Corneille (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Hon. Member raised this question concerning the review of war veterans allowance and the timing of the opening of the Act. The review has made good progress to date and the Minister anticipates that legislative proposals will be ready for consideration either in the fall or early next spring.

The Hon. Member indicated that the War Veterans Allowance Act had several deficiencies that require correction. I think it is most important in discussing the perceived inadequacy of the War Veterans Allowance Act to understand the history of this dynamic piece of legislation and the basic purpose to which it has always addressed itself.

The War Veterans Allowance Act was introduced in 1930 to ensure that veterans with few assets and very little income were provided with a decent standard of living. It addressed particularly those veterans who had experienced pre-aging due to their war time service. This was a pioneer piece of social legislation which, over the last 53 years, has been frequently amended to ensure its continuing relevance to the needs of veterans and dependents.

It will be of interest to Members to know that some of the special provisions of this legislation include guaranteeing the surviving spouse of the recipient of war veterans allowance the equivalent of one year's married rate in order to ensure that the initial period of bereavement is without financial hardship. This really helps in the time of acute need.

In addition, Members will appreciate that veterans' allowances are fully indexed and are adjusted quarterly to ensure that benefits paid are as responsive as possible to changes in price of goods such as shelter, food and clothing. Furthermore, allowances are paid for dependent children. In 1973, the requirement to declare assets or to have them reduced to a certain level in order to qualify for the allowance was removed.

As mentioned earlier, this Act has been changed several times to ensure its continuing relevance to the changing needs of veterans and dependents. The most recent change, Members will recall, took place in 1980 with the passage of Bill C-40. The major improvements made at that time included an increase in the single rate of allowance of \$480 per year and of the married rate of allowance of \$840 per year.

Moreover, the amount of income received by single and married allowance recipients over age 65 and under age 65 began to be corrected with this legislation which will be resolved by April 1, 1986. An enhanced capacity of the Minister to forgive allowance overpayments that were received either through no fault of the recipients or where the collection would cause hardship, was enacted. This has resulted in a much more compassionate administration of this legislation in line with its intent to help low income veterans and their dependents to provide for their ongoing maintenance.

Finally, just in April of this year, the level of casual earning exemption under this legislation was significantly increased.

In respect of the current review it is not so much prompted by the inadequacy of this statute but rather the need to ensure that it has no inequitable provisions, that WVA benefits can be delivered quickly and that the Act is managed as efficiently and as effectively as possible.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m.

At 6.30 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.