

Suggested Pension Payment Corrections

set to work for this important group of citizens of Canada who, because of age or infirmity, are no longer able to make their way in the employment field.

I feel I should pay a tribute to the members of the war veterans allowance board for their comprehensive report setting out the activities of the war veterans allowance program. It is interesting to note—and I mention this so that we may be made more aware of our responsibilities in this direction—that the average age of recipients of war veterans allowance who saw service in the first world war is now 75, and that the average age of those who served in the second world war is 59 years. Some hon. members may be surprised to learn that there are widows of veterans of the 1885 war still to care for, or that 182 veterans of the South African war and 415 widows of men who fought in that war are still receiving allowances. I thought these figures might impress those whose responsibility it is to care for these Canadians.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I compliment the board on its work over the years and trust they will continue their sympathetic consideration of the cases of all veterans who apply for allowances, and that generosity will be shown when deciding the amount which veterans in receipt of allowances are permitted to earn. I repeat my expression of concern about the need to improve the position of all senior citizens in our country and on behalf of all opposition members who have similarly expressed concern in the course of the day's debate, I plead for action on the part of ministers who have the power to deal with this situation. Let them do so without further delay.

Mr. McIntosh: May I ask a question? My question is directed to the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé) through you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask Your Honour to consider that the minister has been sitting here all afternoon and this evening. In view of this, perhaps you would allow him sufficient time, before ten o'clock, in which to speak. I imagine he has a statement to make with regard to war veterans allowances, a statement which is long past due. Would Your Honour give him time to speak before ten o'clock?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Eudes Dubé (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. McIntosh) for having paved the way for my speech. In fact, I wanted to say only a

[Mr. Marshall.]

few words when he asked me to participate in this debate.

I have been in the house since the discussion started on the notice of motion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and I was waiting to speak until a member of the opposition dealt with the subject I am particularly concerned with, namely veterans affairs.

Mr. Speaker, on February 17 last, in the course of a debate started by a member of the New Democratic party, the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman) on the adjournment motion, I was saying that several war veterans are already in receipt of a guaranteed annual income, as is proposed by his colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. Of course this guarantee is a result of the application of the War Veterans' Allowance Act which, as all hon. members know, has been in force since 1930.

Of course, as I was saying, most war veterans, fortunately, are integrated in the Canadian labour force and they can look after themselves. We are happy and proud to see that a great number of war veterans are very successful and that some of them have achieved a very high status on their own initiative.

However, in this field as in others, not all war veterans have been fortunate and healthy enough to become successful. Therefore, it is the government's responsibility to help them obtain promotions, to succeed and to survive, in some instances.

In fact, since 1930, more than 300,000 war veterans have benefitted from this legislation. Mr. Speaker, I should now point out that this legislation does not apply to all war veterans. It provides only for those who need financial assistance, in the first place, as it would be quite useless for the government to assist those who are getting along very well already. Furthermore, the law applies only to those who fought on an actual theatre of war and to those already in receipt of a disability pension or who served during both world wars.

Other limitations concerning the age of applicants are included in the law. In fact, only those having reached the age of 60 are entitled to an allowance or those under 60 suffering from a physical disability. For those war veterans of the opposite sex—the fair sex, evidently—allowances can be paid to those aged 55.

At the present time, some war veterans are entitled to an allowance which, in addition to