

*Pension Acts*

respect of two of them—20 per cent for his back, which in itself keeps him from doing a proper day's work, and 5 per cent for another disability which is affecting his ears. He said he had lost his sense of smell and taste. He then said, "Big deal, democracy". He has a gland problem and one year ago was operated on for cancer. I visited this man and I know he simply cannot work. He is hardly able to talk as a result of the cancer which affected his tongue. He is totally disabled. He asked whether I had ever been disabled, and suggested it was a helpless feeling.

Where can these people turn? This legislation is only reviewed every five years. It is true that in 1966 there was an increase in allowances, and another in 1968. We must establish in legislation such as this a means of automatic review in order that something can be done for our veterans on a yearly basis. There are fewer and fewer veterans as the years go by, and we should be able to treat them better than we have in the past.

**Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming):** Mr. Speaker, when speaking on this legislation we are speaking for 750,000 Canadians, 250,000 of whom are receiving some type of assistance from the government. I listened this afternoon with a great deal of interest to many of the speakers who suggested that Canada has the best veterans legislation in the world. This may or may not be so. I agree that the government has passed legislation increasing pensions by 10 per cent, with a 15 per cent increase to the recipients of war veterans allowance. This is one aspect which affects a large number of veterans. Anyone who thinks that we have been overly generous with those veterans has not considered the contribution they made for Canada. Perhaps as a result of that contribution we are sitting here tonight.

It took us more than five years to decide on this legislation. It is true we had participatory democracy for a long time during which the government set up the Woods committee. That committee investigated this matter at great length and in great detail. It made a number of recommendations. If this government was actually doing for the veterans what several government members have suggested, it would be implementing the Woods committee recommendations. There is not a veteran in this country who would disagree with the recommendations contained in that report. They feel they are fair and just and that they should have been implemented by this government.

Following the receipt of that report, the government did not decide what was equitable but, rather, what could be done for veterans in view of our economic situation. The government asked itself how much it could give the veterans, having regard to what the Woods committee decided the nation owed its veterans. I was a member of that committee and listened to all the submissions. In all fairness let me say I have not been a member of a committee which did more honest work than that one. That committee had the co-operation and support of veterans organizations allied in one group for the purpose of appearing before the committee. The committee also had the benefit of the knowledge and advice of

officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs. In my opinion they are all dedicated to the best possible treatment of veterans and the development of the best possible legislation.

This bill represents the opinion of the government in respect of those parts of the Woods committee report that can be adopted. It has been mentioned that approval is expressed in this month's issue of *The Legion*. I apologize to the Legion for referring to this matter when I have not read the latest issue. No doubt it was delivered to my office, but I have not had an opportunity of going there since arriving this afternoon by plane. I am reminded very much of the days when I was a union representative. After negotiating for a long time on propositions I had put to the company forcefully, I returned to my membership to sell them on the settlement I had tentatively agreed to. I did that on the best terms possible. I do not blame the Canadian Legion for following this course. Their representatives put up a good fight. They are satisfied with many parts of the bill and I am sure they would be less than honest if they did not put their best foot forward in selling the bill to the organization.

I agree with the last speaker who said he has received many letters from veterans. I have received a number of letters, as I am sure most hon. members have, and the majority of them contain complaints about this type of legislation. Many organizations have commented favourably on the recommendations contained in the Woods committee report. Most veterans would have been much more pleased had the government implemented those recommendations. The white paper on veterans legislation is represented by this bill, with a few modifications. Credit in this regard can be given to the committee. One of the changes recommended by the committee which did not meet with the approval of the department involves the question of multiple disabilities.

● (9:40 p.m.)

As everyone is aware, the Woods Committee recommended that in a small number of very exceptional and well-deserving cases the pension paid to the veteran should be  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times the amount of a 100 per cent pension. I do not intend to go over all the arguments that were presented, but I believe most veterans and veterans organizations are of the opinion that the veteran cannot be compensated for the disability he received. I am speaking of those with quadruple amputations who are totally unable to look after themselves or who are totally unable to receive any advantage from life itself. We have an obligation to these people which certainly cannot be repaid in money. Then we heard about several who, if they received  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times the money they are now receiving, would not have representatives of Household Finance rapping on their door. This is one way in which they could be assisted.

We have decided by means of this bill to increase the maximum benefit, on proof of need, to \$2,400. Taking into consideration all the factors, the members of the committee, which includes government members, agreed that the maximum additional allowance should be \$3,500. This was a compromise. The compromise was not made

[Mr. Comeau.]