

The Address—Mr. Gillis

twenty-year period, his widow is not eligible. In my view that section of the act, as it affects widows of service personnel who could qualify otherwise, should be amended.

It is a small point. I should imagine a comparatively small amount of money is involved. It is, however, a source of irritation. The government should keep in mind that every satisfied customer is a good organizer for it. One or two cases such as I have described can poison the minds of many people in a community. All the good things are forgotten; the hundred and one benefits do not come to mind; what stands out like a sore thumb is the fact that Mrs. Jones, whose husband died a month before she would have been eligible under the act, has become an object of charity in the community, when, because of hair-splitting, it was ruled that she was not entitled. I do not think it is even good politics for the government to permit that sort of thing to be chucked around in the next election campaign. The parliamentary assistant, with whatever influence and persuasion he may have—and he has considerable—should seek to remedy this with treasury board. An amendment should be made, because if we should happen to have a contest in the near future such complaints would be unanswerable.

Another point the parliamentary assistant should stress very strongly is that of permissible earnings. At the present time the pension and permissible earnings allowed a recipient of war veterans allowance are below the amount fixed for those who come under the old age security provisions affecting those from 65 to 69 years. The maximum now permitted a single veteran is \$610 a year, while that for a married veteran is \$1,100. Under the old age assistance measure, affecting those from 65 to 69, the permissible earnings and pension are set at \$720 and \$1,200. The least the government should do is to bring the war veterans allowance in line with the pension. I would hope, myself, that it might go much further.

If I had time I could place many examples on record, but I am not going to do it just now. I hold in my hand a document setting out certain facts in a particular case. This veteran was receiving the maximum war veterans allowance as a married man. Then it was pointed out there was something in the act about casual earnings. He had a job at the hospital for which he received \$285 a year. The hospital was quite satisfied, because it was the type of work for which they had difficulty finding applicants, for the simple reason that the income from that work was not sufficient. The man in question was able to give satisfactory service in

a small community for this amount, and for a couple of years proceeded to do so. However, someone reported him, with the suggestion that what he was earning was not casual but rather in the nature of permanent earnings. It was alleged that he was permanently employed, because he could depend on receiving the \$285 each year. His war veterans allowance was reduced accordingly, and a claim was made against him with the result that he had to reimburse the department for what he had been paid in the two years, and in this way was caused considerable trouble. The case went before the district authority and then before the appeal board at Ottawa, both of which had no alternative but to say, "That is the way the act works."

Surely this is unfair. The description of casual earnings as set out in the act should be clarified. I do not blame the investigator or those who administer the act, because casual earnings can be construed in many ways. But if a man who performs an essential service in a humanitarian institution for which he receives this very small amount of money cannot be said to have received casual earnings for that kind of work, then I do not know what it could be. Surely the expression "casual earnings" must be more clearly defined.

I am not suggesting that those who administer war veterans allowances should stick to the \$720 and \$1,200. We know that many war veterans who have been declared unemployable, and who have become the recipients of war veterans allowances, are employed in heavy industry. A man may leave a steel plant, a coal mine, a textile plant or an automobile industry where the work is heavy and where he must be on his feet much of the time. Such a man, who may be receiving a war veterans allowance, after a little rest may find that he is able to do a good deal of useful work, and might be able to earn enough through casual employment as a doorman, as an elevator operator or in some other way to place himself in a position where he would have a fairly decent standard of living.

If on this basis of casual earnings a man is to be pinned down, he will find that he must refrain from doing anything if he is to retain his allowance. He will not take a chance on earning anything at all for fear of upsetting his right to war veterans allowance. I say that in this connection more administrative latitude should be allowed. Those who administer the act from the local offices, who see the people, who understand the conditions and are familiar with them, should be given sufficient latitude to make recommendations to the board at Ottawa or to the district