

*Pension Acts*

1971, issue appears the words "A great step forward". If you have time, Mr. Speaker, you might turn to page 10 of that magazine and read the editorial which reiterates this statement on the front page. The editorial is entitled "A great step forward—amendments to the Pension Act—the most extensive improvements in half a century". Those words express the feelings of the veterans of Canada for this government in respect of Bill C-203. These are the observations the minister should read and digest. He should consider criticism when it is advanced in a proper manner and, if necessary, change some parts of the bill.

On the other hand, may I respectfully point out that all that we as Members of Parliament have to do to answer the criticism put forward by opposition members this afternoon is ask this question: Would they prefer to be pensioners under Canadian laws, or pensioners under English laws? Would they rather be Canadian veterans, or Polish veterans? Everyone knows how hard the Poles fought during the last war. I had the privilege of fighting with one of their divisions in Italy and France. I assure the House that no one fought harder than they did, and no one suffered more casualties on a percentage basis. I again respectfully ask members of the opposition parties whether they would rather be Canadian veterans living in Newfoundland or any other part of Canada, veterans of the Polish army living in Poland, or veterans of the English army living in England.

Let us examine the pension legislation of the wealthiest country in the world, the United States. Let us compare that legislation with Canadian legislation. I do not refer specifically to the legislation proposed in Bill C-203 but the legislation as it has existed until now. Hon. members will find that even before the introduction of this bill, Canada took second place to no country in the world as far as its treatment of veterans was concerned. That does not mean there cannot be improvement. This government, as has been the case with governments in the past, is worried because of the effect inflation and the rising cost of living has had on pensioners in this country. These veterans, just as anyone else, deserve an increase. According to the Canadian Legion, Canadian veterans have accepted this bill almost in its entirety. They have congratulated the minister for taking this great step forward in veterans legislation.

Once again this afternoon we heard from an hon. member of the House who is looked upon with fondness, not only because of his gentle manner but because of his common sense. I refer to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). He congratulated the Minister of Veterans Affairs but suggested that these increases, rather than starting next April 1 should be made retroactive to April 1, 1970. Let me say respectfully to that hon. member and others that I appreciate the remarks of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. Anyone can promise anything if he does not have to back up his promises. I do not know how long the hon. member has been here, but I would guess it is probably 20 years. I say most respectfully that if he is here another 30 years, and he will be a reasonably old man by then—

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Oh, no!

[Mr. Whicher.]

**Mr. Whicher:** —will never have to back up the promises he made this afternoon or those which he makes almost every day of the week.

**Mr. Marshall:** Would the hon. member permit a question? I wonder whether, under the War Veterans Allowance Act, the hon. member knows how much advantage a veteran aged 77.6 years will receive from the increases which will become applicable on April 1, 1971.

**Mr. Whicher:** That is a very good question. I have not figured out the answer. I will let the veterans of Canada figure it out for the hon. member. The Canadian Legion has said that this legislation is a great step forward, and in this way I think the veterans of Canada have answered my hon. friend. We should be proud of the veterans legislation which has come into effect in the past. I have the honour of being a veteran, along with dozens of members of this House. I think we should compare our veterans legislation with similar legislation on a world-wide basis. We should compare our veterans legislation with that of the United States. Pensioners in that country receive much less than our pensioners.

The veterans of this country, including those in this House in all parties, fought hard against a great race of people who were our enemies at the time. Those enemies were very fine fighters. I refer to the German race. I should like to know how much veterans living in west Germany receive in pension. If the hon. member has any idea, I ask him how much the veterans now living in east Germany receive in pension. They receive about 30 per cent of what Canadian veterans are receiving. We should be proud of that fact. We should be proud, not because German veterans are receiving less but because our people are being looked after to the limit of our financial resources.

One hon. member said today that veterans on disability pension were only receiving 10 per cent. It was said that a certain percentage is lost each year because of increasing inflation, and that pensions have not kept up with the cost of living over the years on a comparative percentage basis. We must remember that we are not only concerned with the increases proposed in Bill C-203. We must remember the percentage increases of the last seven years. Veterans pensions have increased in that period by over 50 per cent. This is something of which the Liberal Party, which is in power today, and the Conservative Party, which was in power for some time, can be proud.

There is to be an increase of 15 per cent in war veterans allowance. A married couple will receive \$201 per month and a single person will receive \$121 per month. We must also remember that veterans will be allowed to earn additional money. A married couple will have the right to earn up to \$271 per month, and a single man will have the right to earn up to \$161. These figures may seem somewhat insignificant, but I respectfully remind hon. members that the increase in disability pensions will cost the taxpayers of Canada \$22 million per year and the increase in war veterans allowance will cost \$21 million per year. In total, probably at least \$50 million is being given by the taxpayers, and rightfully so, to