

*War Veterans Allowance Act*

government is not prepared to accept that date, at least it would be a great improvement if it were to accept the amendment proposed in this bill.

Hon. members should also take into consideration the fact that soldiers had very little control over where they were going to be posted, especially up until 1917. I am not exactly sure of the rules that applied at that time, whether if a man were conscripted it was only for service in Canada, or if there was a specific date when conscription meant for service anywhere in the world. I shall be very brief because I think the time has come when we should accept this principle of service anywhere, be it in Canada or elsewhere. This bill would be an improvement and would remove some of the gaps and injustices in the act.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten):** The hon. member for Okanagan Boundary (Mr. Pugh).

**Mr. Pugh:** May I defer to the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre.

**Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre):** Thank you very much. I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. McIntosh) for raising this problem and going to the trouble of presenting a bill and bringing in a very well documented case for our consideration.

I was very much interested in some of the things he said and in his knowledge of the situation with regard to first world war veterans. I took particular note of the indication he gave that he realizes that men who served in an actual theatre of war in the first world war were not at times too kindly disposed to those who did not reach that theatre of war.

Even in a theatre of war such as Belgium and France, the men who were up in the front lines were not too enthusiastic about people who were serving in the base installations. At times that attitude of mind prevailed even with regard to those men who were at rear headquarters and battalion headquarters just behind the lines. That attitude of mind prevailed for a long time, and I am sure it affected the drawing up of legislation in this house and the definition of the word "veteran." The word veteran, to a man who fought in the first world war, meant a person who had actually served in a theatre of war and who had been in grave danger.

The second world war changed the picture very considerably, because men and women from Canada served virtually all over the world, and places in the first world war which

were free from serious attack became theatres of war in the second world war. A man who served in Britain in the second world war served in a theatre of war, whereas in the first world war this was not the case; he had to cross the channel before he really ran into any danger. Those of us who were in Britain in the second world war know perfectly well that we were often in a much safer place in a military camp than were civilians in the towns and cities.

So the word "veteran" has changed its meaning over the years and is not as distinctive as it was just subsequent to the first world war. This has caused some difficulty in the Department of Veterans Affairs when legislation was being drawn up, as well as to the veterans organizations. The definition of the word "veteran" has been considerably modified, as is instanced in the notes to the bill in front of us. I quote from the reference to section 30, subsection 3, where a veteran is described as a person who served in the United Kingdom during the first world war for at least 365 days prior to November 12, 1918. Enlargement of the term "veteran" has caused some heartburning in official circles for a long time.

The hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. McIntosh) indicated the interest of people now in the older veterans, and the advantages of the War Veterans Allowance Act. Of course, it was originally drawn up, as he said, to make provision for men who served in a theatre of war—men who served in the trenches and returned without any visible sign of having served overseas—that is, they were not wounded. Yet as time elapsed medical officers observed that a number of the men who had served in the trenches aged prematurely; unwounded men who had perhaps served for a year or two years or even longer during the engagements in France came home to Canada without any extra provision being made for them at all. But the aging factor became apparent and, consequently, the War Veterans Allowance Act was developed and veterans aged 60 and over, in difficult economic circumstances, became eligible for assistance under that measure.

With the development of social security and a changing attitude in Canada, the Pension Act and the War Veterans Allowance Act have been extended, and I think properly so. The proposal now placed before us is one which is worthy of very serious consideration. I recall, when I was minister of veterans affairs, dealing with this particular problem of the