

disability from the first world war are more likely in later years to feel the effects of the disability they suffered in that campaign. Those men should not be deterred, by fear of the commission making a reduction in their pension, from making application for increases.

I believe the promise of the government is inherent in any basic pension scheme. Certain standards should be maintained. When the cost of living goes up, the promise of the people or the government is being repudiated and the pensioners are not able to maintain the standard of living to which they are entitled. If we look at it in that way we will see to it that these men are given a proper pension and some form of security which will assure to them that they, their children and their families will not have to suffer as a result of their war service. I know of no other way in which that security can be guaranteed to them.

There are many other points which could be discussed and with which a committee of the house could deal when this matter is placed before it. We would like to see the bill go to the committee as quickly as possible. Naturally the committee will consist of a majority of government members, and as a result it will be difficult for members in the opposition to introduce amendments which would involve the expenditure of public money. Under the rules this is not permitted.

I can assure the government and all connected with it that we expect when the committee deals with this legislation it will bring back to the house a bill which can be considered adequate. If the bill is adequate to meet the situation, the support of this group will continue: if it is not, there will be opposition.

Mr. VICTOR QUELCH (Acadia): Mr. Speaker, in order to expedite the passage of the bill at this time, I should like to be brief in my remarks. Ever since the announcement by the former minister of veterans affairs in July last to the effect that the committee on veterans affairs would be set up at this session, veterans have hoped that the long overdue amendment to the Pension Act would be brought down. I am afraid the present bill will fall far short of their expectations.

In the first place, the increase in the amount of pension is considered too low. Second, none of the recommendations made by the committee on veterans affairs in 1946, passed unanimously—and later vetoed by the minister—has been included in the bill. Third, a

[Mr. Castleden.]

number of recommendations already made by the legion and the national council of veterans affairs have been ignored.

However, since it is desirable that the measure should pass as quickly as possible in order that the payment of these increases in pensions may be made, perhaps it is fortunate that very little of a controversial nature, in addition to the increase in pensions, appears in the bill. I should hope however that the Minister of Veterans Affairs is in a position to assure the house that this bill is not the last word in pension legislation for the present session.

All veteran organizations have urged that the increase in pension for all beneficiaries under the act should not be less than 25 per cent. The hon. member for Hastings-Peterborough (Mr. White) quoted from *The Legionary* and built up a strong case for an increase of 25 per cent. Other organizations have emphasized the fact that the increase should not be less than 33 per cent, and I have received a number of resolutions from boards of trade in my constituency urging that the basic rate for a 100 per cent disability pensioner be set at not less than \$100 a month. The present bill provides for an increase of only 16 per cent and therefore falls considerably short of those recommendations.

The veterans organizations are asking at this time that the pensions of veterans of world war I be stabilized. I was glad to have the assurance of the minister that when the pension bill is before the committee a thorough investigation will be made of this whole question. I think all of us agree that it is a deplorable situation that veterans of world war I, whose average age is around 59 or 60 years, are called up before a board and told that, since their disability has decreased, there will be a reduction in their pension. Surely when a veteran of world war I has reached the age of 59 or 60 years he should be assured that no action will be taken to reduce the amount of his pension. The present rates should be stabilized as a floor and the only revisions in the future should be upward.

In 1946 the veterans affairs committee voted in favour of deleting the deadline of April 1, 1944, affecting widows, wives and children of veterans of the first great war, but the Minister of Veterans Affairs vetoed that action. It should be remembered that, after careful consideration, the committee unanimously agreed that the deadline should be struck out. I suggest to the minister that legislation should be brought down this year to take