

War Veterans' Allowance Act

and in the case of Alberta to \$840. But if the dominion government does not agree to transfer, those provinces are carrying a load which is rightly that of the dominion government.

I think the house will agree that the provinces at the present time are carrying all the load with respect to welfare that they can bear. British Columbia will be paying in old age assistance, \$40 a month and Alberta \$40 a month, because the provincial governments pay one-half of the old age assistance, which is \$27.50, and they also pay a \$20 bonus, which is, \$47.50 out of the \$55 which the old age assistance pensioner is getting. It would mean an income for a person who is eligible for an allowance under the war veterans allowance act of \$900 as against \$840 he would get under this act. The same applies in the case of Alberta except for the fact that it is \$5 less.

Earlier this year, speaking in this chamber, I quoted the case of an elderly man—he is, indeed, elderly, being 92 years of age—who served in the first world war. He is in receipt of old age security benefit amounting to \$55 plus an Alberta bonus of \$15, making a total of \$840. So the Alberta government is paying \$180 a year in respect of a man of this character. The federal government says: “you will have to survive on \$660 old age assistance for a year”. Well, the Alberta and British Columbia governments say: “we know quite well you cannot do it, so we will supplement your income”.

I am glad that the permissive income has been raised, although I see no valid reason why it should not have been set at the \$1,200 and \$2,000 limits suggested by the Canadian Legion. Canada has nothing to lose and everything to gain by giving the veterans the right to an income of that kind. I draw the attention of the house to the fact that after these old people who have given their services to the country have reached a certain age, if they have something they can do they would rather go ahead and do it than sit idly doing nothing; they are much happier when they are occupied, irrespective of whatever added income they may derive. I would suggest that here again the minister take this matter under careful consideration and when the next revision of this act takes place be sure that the permissive income is raised to at least \$1,200 for the single veteran and \$2,400 for the married veteran.

The raises granted represent an improvement for the recipient of war veterans allowance who still has earning capacity, but what about those whose earning capacity has deteriorated to the point where they are unable to accept employment? The war of 1914-18

has been over for 40 years. Thousands of men and women who participated in that battle and who have either partial pensions, which are deductible as income, or no pensions at all are in dire straits because of past neglect of their need and the failure of the government to introduce corrective amendments. While the present amendments represent a step in the right direction they cannot rectify that situation nor give the recipients a reasonable chance to enjoy the country for which they offered their lives. The unfortunate factor is that those who have a small pension, whether service or civil, will not benefit to the extent of those without pension.

One notable feature of these amendments is that regarding those who never left Great Britain during world war I. This was an injustice that should never have been perpetrated and the present government is to be congratulated for at least partially removing it. I could never understand why a veteran was required to have had one year's service in Great Britain. The basic fact must be remembered that these men and women offered their services and put no strings on their offer in terms of stating where they were going. There were no reservations attached to their offer of service.

Mr. MacRae: What about conscripts?

Mr. Irwin: I am not talking about conscripts but even in their case they had no alternative; they had to go where they were sent. If they were taken to England and then sent back then by reason of this they should be much more in line for receiving the war veterans allowance than the men who went as volunteers because the conscripts had no option at all. The service of the veterans was given without reservation and because Canada accepted it there should be no reservations in providing these men with an adequate standard of living in their home country.

I do not see any reference in the present amendments to widows whose husbands could have been eligible for war veterans allowance had they applied for it but preferred to go it alone. These women are now in serious plight and the Legion's suggestion as outlined in its latest brief should be accepted. I am referring now to those veterans who could have been eligible for the allowance had they applied for it but who chose not to do so, preferring to go their own way. The trouble has been that after their death their wives have not been able to make any claim under the act. The Legion has asked that the widows of allied ex-servicemen be granted the allowance in cases where the husband died before completing 20 years' residence in Canada. It also recommends that where all other requirements are met the war