

War Service Grants Act

many widows taken advantage of it, and in most cases have those widows been allowed to get the re-establishment credits? In other words, were they able to satisfy the department that they wanted to use the money for the type of thing for which it can be used?

We are glad also that the time limit on the application for veterans insurance has been covered by this act. I am wondering if any action has been taken by the department to deal with a complaint that was made by the Legion during the presentation of their brief last year. It will be recalled that the Legion pointed out that if a pensioner is insured under the Veterans Insurance Act, and dies, then the amount of the insurance paid to the widow is reduced by reason of the fact that she is in receipt of a pension. This does not seem fair, because if the man had insurance under any other insurance plan, his insurance would not be reduced. Why should the insurance be reduced merely because he is insured under the veterans insurance plan? I should imagine if that fact were widely known it would discourage many veterans from taking out insurance under this act, because certainly the income of his widow is going to be reduced by reason of that fact. Naturally, a man would be better off to take out insurance under some other plan, unless the difference between the two would not be great enough to make it worth while. Perhaps the minister could tell the house by what amount the insurance is reduced by reason of the fact a pensioner has taken out insurance under the act?

Mr. Lapointe: I shall be very pleased when we discuss the bill in committee to try to provide the information requested by hon. members.

Mr. Knowles: May I ask the minister a question as to the form of this bill. Is this bill in a form similar to the one we were discussing yesterday, in that the one bill amends two different acts?

Mr. Lapointe: No, there is only one act. The bill amends sections of the War Service Grants Act.

Mr. Knowles: What about the reference to the Veterans Insurance Act?

Mr. Lapointe: No; the War Service Grants Act provides, among other things, the type of thing for which the re-establishment credit may be used. One of the purposes for which the re-establishment credit may be used is the purchasing of insurance under the Veterans Insurance Act. It is the War Service Grants Act that is amended.

Mr. Green: The hon. member for Royal brought up the question of giving more

[Mr. Quelch.]

publicity to the fact that there are millions of dollars still held in this rehabilitation fund. Could the minister tell us whether or not his department has taken steps to get this information out to the veterans?

Mr. Lapointe: Yes, there have been steps taken. Some of the veterans have been communicated with personally, and some publicity has been given to that fact. I think just a few weeks ago there were some reports carried in the press conveying this information. It is proposed to keep on publicizing the matter during the coming year.

Mr. Brooks: That would be only in Canadian newspapers; what about veterans who are in the United States or some other country? What notice do they get?

Mr. Lapointe: It is rather difficult to communicate with veterans outside of Canada, except individually when we have their addresses. Of course, the veterans organizations are informed of these facts, particularly in the United Kingdom where they have facilities for finding out what developments are taking place in veterans legislation. It is difficult to inform those outside the country, except as I say where we have the addresses of the individuals and can communicate with them.

Mr. Brooks: Is there quite a proportion of the veterans who have not accepted their rehabilitation grants outside of the country, or are most of them in Canada?

Mr. Lapointe: I do not know exactly what the number is, but of the amount still appearing to the credit of veterans about 10 per cent would be payable to veterans who are living outside of Canada.

Mr. Green: Why is there not a provision written into the act to enable the money to be paid to the children of the veteran without any restrictions? For example, I understand that if the mother had divorced the veteran before he died, then neither she nor the children could get these rehabilitation benefits. Originally the act restricted the benefits to the wife and the mother, and in the latter case only where the veteran had been in support of his mother. Why not make the provision such that these children could benefit without any restriction?

I know of a case where the mother quite properly divorced the father, and then the father died. He had not used his rehabilitation benefits, but the money is not available to help the children although, as it happens, they are in urgent need. Surely the intent should be that the children could get the benefit.