

*Pension Acts*

Allowances Board, for his spirit of comradeship and dedication in serving veterans over the years, as well as for the assistance he offered to all members in line with their duty to veteran constituents. It is not difficult to use the phrase "service beyond the call of duty" in Mr. Cromb's case, and we wish him well in his retirement. I would just like to remind the minister again that the increases under the War Veterans Allowances Act, even with the new maximum allowable income, are still below the poverty line. I hope that he will make another appeal to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) to reach at least this level of requirement.

In moving on to the subject of veterans disability pensions I think I must say, in a spirit of comradeship, that the amendments are in the main satisfactory but, if I may use part of a well worn expression "too little too late"; the "too late" certainly applies. The method of operation of this government has become very obvious. I can refer to their proficiency in delaying tactics when it comes to living up to their responsibility in providing for those Canadians who cannot look after themselves. I must say that I have been rather naive when I look back and note the amount of time that elapsed between the setting up of the Woods Committee and the stage at which we have arrived at this moment.

The Woods Committee was set up in 1965, and we on the Veterans Affairs Committee, after coaxing and cajoling, managed to have the report referred to the Veterans Affairs Committee in 1968. Here we are in 1971, having only reached the second reading stage of the bill. Almost six years have passed, and by April of this year we hope that direct action will be taken for the war veterans of this country. I can only sincerely admit that in my responsibility as part of the opposition I must have been either too naive or trusting in going along with government action to maintain the status quo and in having allowed the strategy of this government to work. I, therefore, apologize to the dependents of veterans who have passed on for the procrastination of those who govern now as well as those who have governed before, and for their failure to those citizens of our country to whom we owe the greatest debt.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Marshall:** The increases are good and the new amendments will benefit a great many. But when we stop and look at the average age of the first world war veteran whos is in his late seventies, and the world war II veteran who is in his late fifties, whether he is a paraplegic or a quadruplegic, whether he suffered in a Hong Kong prisoner of war camp, whether he suffers from loss of limbs or requires attendance allowance and will now receive the benefits he deserves, we have no reason to be too proud. It is not too difficult to emphasize what I mean by comparing the action of this government in this case with that taken to deal with the other segment of our society which requires the help of the government, namely, the poverty stricken. I refer especially to the aged, the blind, the retarded, and others who fall into the category of the disabled who cannot fend for themselves.

[Mr. Marshall.]

What has happened since 1968 with regard to these citizens? Are not the tactics of this government very obvious by now?

The first step was a proclamation in a throne speech of the goal of the just society. The second step was more proclamations by cabinet ministers and by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) of our country, which were politically oriented, that every Canadian regardless of where he lives must enjoy a decent quality of life and equal opportunity and that it is our responsibility to see that they do. I have been hearing these proclamations with considerable dismay, and Canadians listened and believed, but to their sorrow and dismay they have not been carried out.

The next tactic, which was as calculated as a military exercise, was the appointment of royal commissions, of Senate committees, and the production of white papers which have only caused further delays because they have to be translated in the two official languages. We have also heard the excuses that no more can be spent on the poverty stricken without taxes being raised. Then, the blame was shifted to the opposition. Now, to bring things up to date, as we have seen in the past few days, the government threw out some bait and provided \$68,500 to allow those concerned to hold a conference on poverty and to provide more camouflage to delay support for those who are poor and need help right now. I can only say that even though there is not too much military experience in the cabinet today, its members should certainly be described in military history as the best strategists this country has ever known, strategists in deception tactics.

I understand that a very important member of the cabinet, namely the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury), is a former general in the Canadian forces. If he is directing the delaying tactics of this government, then he is doing a first class job. There is certainly not too much military experience in the departments which deal most closely with this type of strategy where it concerns the poor and the veterans. But they have learned well and can be very proud of themselves. I wonder, however, what their consciences tell them. There have been many accolades on the front pages of veterans magazines and in letters from various organizations, but the needy veteran is still waiting for action.

I must say, as I have mentioned with regard to the many letters I have received from the recipients of war veterans allowances, that the letters I have received do not hand out too many bouquets. Let me quote an example of a letter I received from four quadruplegics, signed by four veterans who fall in this category. It reads in part:

• (4:00 p.m.)

The report on the proposed legislation for veterans pensions and supplements leaves much to be desired for the dozen or so quadruplegics. Supplements of attendants and multiple disability allowances are inadequate, as now proposed, to maintain the quadruplegics well-being away from a medical institution—

We are sure by this time that the appointed Commons Committee is well aware of the quadruplegics plight after repeated