

Veterans Affairs Committee Report

first made to refer this matter to the standing committee.

In his eloquent remarks the hon. member for Fort William expressed complete confidence that when the government finishes all its reviews of old age pension matters, blind pensions, the Canada Assistance Plan, retired civil servants, veterans and all the rest, it will come up with a plan that will improve things for everybody. I am afraid I do not have that kind of confidence in the government. Having raised pension matters time and again since we first met here last September, I am afraid my feeling is that the government just does not care about our older and retired people, just does not care about the people who have to rely on these kinds of pensions for a decent standard of living.

What bothers me, and I think in his heart of hearts the Minister of Veterans Affairs shares this concern, is the lack of concern on the part of the Prime Minister and the present government for people in these categories, retired civil servants, old age pensioners, retired employees of the C.N.R. and veterans. These people cannot live on reviews, they cannot live on studies being made of all these various programs, they cannot live on fine statements about these things being involved in the problems of inflation, taxation and all the rest of it. If these retired people, these older people, these veterans, deserve our attention let us give it to them with good grace. Let us give it to them in a generous way. Let us not mistreat them. Let us not treat them with bad faith as, in my view, has been the case with veterans since this government came into power.

I regret very much the long delay in dealing with the Woods report and all these other matters, but now that a motion is on the Order Paper let us have the matter referred. Even yet I wish the minister would hold back his white paper and allow members of the standing committee, on the basis of the representations that the various veterans organizations will make to it, to make their own recommendations to the government in line with the clean and solemn commitment he gave on September 13, 1968.

• (3:20 p.m.)

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I know there is by agreement a cut-off on this debate at four o'clock and I am also aware that other hon. members wish to speak. Therefore I shall be very brief. I wish to put on the record the facts concerning the

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

standing committee which dealt with the estimates in the hope that I will be able to correct a misunderstanding which apparently has arisen in some quarters. The estimates of the department were referred by order of the house of February 20 to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs of which I have the honour to be chairman. Under the rules of the house there is no doubt that the committee could deal only with the estimates which were referred to it. I shall cite citation 304, sections 1 and 2 in Beauchesne's fourth edition, page 244:

1. A committee can only consider those matters which have been committed to it by the house.

2. A committee is bound by, and is not at liberty to depart from, the order of reference.

In considering these estimates the committee met on April 17 at which time it heard from the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé). It met again on April 23 and again on April 25. On April 17, as the result of a question specifically asked by one of the members of the committee, the chairman of the Canadian Pension Commission placed on record a series of statements relating to those aspects of the Woods committee recommendations which had been implemented by the department. He placed on the record of the committee a series of detailed comments. That was on April 17. The committee was adjourned at that time. As chairman I pointed out to hon. members that it might be their pleasure to await the transcript which would provide an opportunity for detailed cross-examination of the witness. On April 23 when the committee met again the transcript was not available. The committee proceeded to hear other witnesses and to ask questions of the chairman of the Canadian Pension Commission.

On April 23 a letter was prepared and delivered the next morning to members of the committee. It was signed by the Dominion Secretary of the Royal Canadian Legion. With the permission of hon. members I should like to insert this letter in *Hansard* or place it on the record. I hope I have permission to insert this letter of April 23 signed by D. M. Thompson and addressed to the chairman and members of the Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am not quite sure whether the hon. member would like to have the letter appear as an appendix to *Hansard* or whether he would like to read it into the record. I might caution him