

The Address—Mr. MacDougall

the act, let us bring down legislation that will conform to the Legion's request which was made to the people of Canada at their last annual meeting.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I come to the third and last point upon which I wish to speak tonight, namely the blind. I believe the government has received recommendations from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, which represents that great body of people in Canada.

Mr. Brooks: May I ask the hon. member a question before he leaves war veterans allowances? Is he aware that recently by regulation the government reduced the amount of casual earnings permitted the war veterans?

Mr. MacDougall: Yes.

Mr. Brooks: Within the last three months?

Mr. MacDougall: Yes, I am aware of that.

Mr. Brooks: We should like to hear him say something about it.

Mr. MacDougall: We will talk about that when we come to it. I have three topics I want to discuss tonight. I am aware of that.

Mr. Brooks: Perhaps the minister will tell us something about it.

Mr. MacDougall: If any of you boys want to take the rostrum, rise in your places and say so.

Mr. Brooks: You might give us all the facts.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

An hon. Member: Can't you take it?

Mr. MacDougall: With respect to the blind, as of September 30 we had in Canada 8,230. The federal share of liability was approximately \$245,000 monthly. The total number of recipients in British Columbia, my province, was 493. The federal share of liability in that instance was approximately \$14,600 monthly. How about cutting out a lot of that chit-chat?

Mr. Brooks: Go on with your speech.

Mr. MacDougall: If you want to carry on with your conversation go out behind the curtain.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I should tell the hon. member that he should not refer to other hon. members except to address them in the names of their constituencies. He has the floor, and hon. members know of course that an hon. member who has the floor must not be interrupted without his consent.

Mr. MacDougall: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. They have me tangled up and I do not know where I stopped. I believe I

had concluded with the words that the federal liability for British Columbia's blind was approximately \$14,600 monthly.

I believe the Canadian National Institute for the Blind has sent letters to all members of all parties respecting an increase for those who have to grope and feel their way through life rather than by vision. In my riding I have an East Indian who has been completely blind since he was eight years of age. I asked him whether he received the blind pension. He said: "No, my friend, I do not receive the blind pension, and I hope I shall never have to receive the blind pension." From the time that man started to work, approximately 35 years ago, to this day he has earned his living without sight. He is a brush and broom maker in Vancouver, and as long as God gives him strength to do that work he will never be a charge upon the blind pension.

Regardless of what part of Canada we represent and to what party we may belong, we should daily realize how fortunate we are that by the grace of God we are able to see our way through this mundane life. Surely it is not too much, and I am sure the taxpayers of Canada would welcome such a venture, to ask that those who are blind, from the ages of 21 to 69, should have their pension increased to \$50 a month without a means test. It is true that on many occasions in life we have to be rebuffed before we recognize how fortunate life has been to us. I am sure I am expressing the sentiment and the collective thoughts of every hon. member when I say that the people of Canada will warmly welcome a gesture by this house with respect to the elimination of the means test for the blind and an increase in their pension from \$40 to \$50 a month.

I could not conclude these remarks respecting the blind without saying that the blind people of Canada are grateful. They are thankful that not only this government but the last parliament and the parliaments that preceded it brought into effect this legislation of which they are beneficiaries. They say thanks a thousand times. Surely in these circumstances we would be well advised to enact the legislation they have asked for and that I am sure we all consider they deserve. We should do that without fear, without hesitation and without delay.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I should like to quote these few verses of a brother of mine. They are not Shakespearean by any manner of means. When he wrote them he was an undergraduate in law in the United States. Later he survived a double mastoid and typhoid fever at the same time, and eventually helped rescue the famous lost