

Veterans Affairs

jurisdiction has any power at this point with respect to that particular issue. I would suggest to the provinces that they should address this very sensitive issue in the administrative arrangements.

Mr. Murphy: I was wondering if the Minister would be offering his good offices to make sure that there is some action taken on the workers' compensation issue. It is something that is important. I know that in some of the earlier discussions that took place there was a belief that the workers' compensation would be included in this legislation.

Mr. Cadieux: Again, I do not think that we can address this particular issue in this legislation because of the jurisdiction. But I will surely raise that particular question, which is very important, and it has to be dealt with by the appropriate authorities. I will definitely offer my good offices to raise the question with the appropriate provinces, and hopefully convince them to deal with it in their arrangements.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported, concurred in, read the third time and passed.

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PENSION ACT, WAR VETERANS ALLOWANCE ACT AND COMPENSATION FOR FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

Hon. George Hees (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Senior Citizens)) moved that Bill C-100, an Act to amend the Pension Act, the War Veterans Allowance Act, to repeal the Compensation for Former Prisoners of War Act and to amend another Act in relation thereto, be now read the second time and referred to Committee of the Whole.

He said: Mr. Speaker, once again it is my pleasure to introduce legislation to this House which will be of benefit to Canadian veterans and their families.

Bill C-100 is omnibus legislation which will remove deficiencies that have been revealed within the existing legislation. We want our legislation to be fair and equitable to all veterans and their families, and Bill C-100 will erase injustices that have inadvertently been allowed to exist.

Spouses of former prisoners of war have been particularly affected, and that is why I am proposing that the Compensation for Former Prisoners of War Act be repealed, and that our POWs and their dependants be covered in the future by the Pension Act, as they were from 1971 until 1976.

I say this, Mr. Speaker, because I believe that Parliament on several occasions intended benefits in the Compensation for

Former Prisoners of War Act to parallel those in the Pension Act. Unfortunately, as there were two separate pieces of legislation, this did not always happen. Repeal of the Act will reduce future chances of this happening.

This legislation puts forward 12 amendments in all, but as many are of a housekeeping nature, my comments will concentrate on the more major items.

As I suggested a moment ago, the Compensation for Former Prisoners of War Act has been lacking in a number of areas, and I am proposing amendments to correct this. We will be improving areas that have been of concern to organizations such as the National Prisoners of War Association, the National Council of Veteran Associations, and the Royal Canadian Legion.

Hon. Members will know, Mr. Speaker, that we compensate former prisoners of war for their time spent in captivity. Also, as with all veterans, former prisoners of war may be entitled to compensation for any disability they sustained during the time of their service.

It is my belief that Parliament's intention had always been to recognize this dual entitlement in the calculation of survivor benefits. Indeed, this was the practice followed by the Canadian Pension Commission until 1986, when it was determined that the legislation, as written, did not include prisoners of war who had not been in receipt of a disability pension. Repealing the Prisoners of War Act and placing prisoner of war benefits in the Pension Act rectifies this situation and means that for all future applicants, dependant and survivor benefits will again be in step as intended.

• (1610)

Similarly, it was found that the POW legislation did not permit the Canadian Pension Commission to combine rates when it had to calculate survivor benefits. Prisoner of war compensation and disability compensation must now be determined independently, and this reduces the payments being made to a number of widows. The amendment before the House will allow the commission to return to its traditional methods and cap the maximum at one full survivor's pension.

This will be of particular benefit to widows of prisoners of war who had been in receipt of pension and compensation which, when combined, yield a total of 48 per cent or more. For example, a widow of a POW who had been receiving 25 per cent compensation and 25 per cent pension will currently receive a survivor benefit of half the 25 per cent compensation and half the 25 per cent disability pension. This amendment will permit the commission to add the two percentages and pay the higher full widow's pension instead of two proportionate pensions.

We are also proposing that the married rate should be paid for one full year following the death of a spouse. This puts our POW benefits in line with those that already exist for disability pensioners.