

Supply—Veterans Affairs

strong sentiments of the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre and also to point out that in my constituency, and I am sure in all others across Canada, there are invariably veterans who feel that the burden of proof imposed upon them by the Canadian Pension Commission is unjust. We have all had the idea that in cases of doubt the issue should be resolved in favour of the veterans; yet I know of several instances in my own area—and I am sure other hon. members have had the same experience—where veterans feel that the burden of proof is resolved against them unless they can clearly establish their case.

I understand that the purport of the legislation was not to throw that stringent a burden upon a veteran who may have some complaint or disability which he finds virtually impossible to link up with service rendered to Canada years ago. I further understand that the Woods report will deal with this point, which I think makes it all the more necessary that the minister see to it that those responsible for translating the report place it before us as soon as possible. If it is only the translation that is holding up the report, then I think this is one of the biggest arguments that can be raised against bilingualism. Whether a report be in one language or the other, surely the important thing is to have it before us so that some action can be taken to clear up long-standing abuses. Certainly I hope this action will be taken.

Mr. Barnett: Mr. Chairman, I see the Minister of Veterans Affairs is busily taking notes, presumably in order to reply to the questions being raised in the committee. There are two matters upon which I should like some clarification from the minister. First, what, if anything, can he do to assist people on war veterans allowance who for some time have been experiencing a nightmare? I admit that the nightmare was not created directly by the minister but rather by his colleague, the minister of National Health and Welfare, who brought in the supplementary benefit for recipients of the old age security pension. As the minister knows, that department invited people to apply for the supplementary benefit. A great many people on war veterans allowance accepted that invitation in good faith but as a result found themselves in what I have described as a nightmarish situation in that they would have received more than the allowable income permitted under war veterans allowance.

I have not had the experience on the veterans affairs committee of my colleague from Kootenay West, but I do try to follow the statements made by the minister in the house from time to time. One of the matters that I feel the minister has still not explained to the satisfaction of myself and certainly to the satisfaction of some people on war veterans allowance is how the increase resulting from the cost of living index provision can be allowed to war veterans allowance recipients without exceeding the ceiling on income but the supplementary benefit itself cannot be allowed. How is somebody on war veterans allowance going to sort out all the permutations that can arise in this situation?

For example, a person on old age security receives the \$1.50 or 2 per cent increase. If he has applied for and is receiving the supplementary benefit he gets the extra 60 cents a month. On the other hand, if he decides, as an increasing number of recipients of war veterans allowance have, not to reapply after one year's receipt of the old age supplementary benefit, then I understand he is not entitled to the 60 cents a month cost of living bonus, which to say the least is a fairly modest amount. Nevertheless people with the kind of income ceiling that such recipients of war veterans allowance have are called upon to take into account relatively small amounts of money.

How can the minister justify the equity of a system—I realize that this matter does not come wholly within the purview of his department—whereby certain people on war veterans allowance receive the cost of living bonus while others are unable to do so, depending on whether they decide to apply for the supplementary benefit? Without going into this question extensively, because the matter has been debated in the house, could the minister explain with a greater degree of clarity than he has hitherto why it is that there is a ruling that war veterans allowance recipients cannot be allowed to receive the old age income supplement if they are also old age security pensioners unless it is included in their income for purposes of the ceiling?

There is one other question I want to raise with the minister. I grant that this may be a temporary situation but it is one that arises in connection with war veterans allowance recipients who are receiving a disability pension from the United Kingdom. If my understanding is correct there was an increase in the disability pension rate in the United