

*War Veterans Allowance Act*

from Ottawa and the more the provinces have to do with it, the more political patronage enters into it.

Not so long ago I brought up before the board in Ottawa certain cases which were turned down. I felt they had been turned down for good reasons, but around election time, if I may mention such times, some of my political opponents thought that these men should make further application for war veterans allowances. They were told that if they made application it was quite likely they would get it. They were turned down for the same reason as they had been turned down before, for which I commend the board.

I repeat that once this matter is decentralized, once the administration is placed in the hands of the provinces or districts, the more political patronage there will be. I fear that that is what is happening at the present time with a lot of our social security measures. Unless strong representations are received from the different districts throughout Canada I think this matter should be left with the board in Ottawa. I do not think a travelling board will improve the situation at all.

**Mr. Gregg:** Mr. Chairman, I will not extend the discussion because I know that all who have taken part are anxious that the department should be given an opportunity to work this out carefully. I should like to thank the hon. member for Royal for his kind words about the chairman and the members of the board, with which I heartily agree. I think his remarks illustrate the point I was trying to make to the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra, namely, the importance of the board, which has held and will continue to hold the responsibility for this matter, having a chance to review the work that is being carried on within the districts, and to give guidance and direction. I am sure that, during the coming year there will be an opportunity to work it out to the satisfaction of all districts concerned.

**Mr. White (Hastings-Peterborough):** Did I understand the minister to mean, in reply to the objection raised by the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra, that all applications that go through the district authority will be reviewed by the board?

**Mr. Gregg:** No.

**Mr. White (Hastings-Peterborough):** Which ones will be reviewed, those that are appealed?

**Mr. Gregg:** Let me put it this way, and I am not attempting to tie the hands of those who will administer this legislation but rather to answer the question of my hon. friend. My opinion would be that in the ordinary case it would be those that the district

authority wanted to discuss with the board, or a representative of the board, on their next visit.

**Mr. White (Hastings-Peterborough):** Where an application is turned down by the district authority will it automatically be reviewed by the board without request?

**Mr. Gregg:** If the applicant desires it, it will be reviewed by a member of the board.

**Mr. Fulton:** I cannot quite appreciate the effect of the change that will be made when this goes through compared with the situation now existing. I understand that at the present time when applications are made by veterans living outside centres where the district offices are located the procedure is that an investigator is sent by the office to the outlying point to make an investigation and, as I understand it, his recommendation. Then the recommendation is simply approved or disallowed by the board in Ottawa. What will be the new procedure when the minister has gone through all this routine of setting up boards in the district offices?

**Mr. Gregg:** I think I can answer more clearly by stating that it is an attempt to simplify and speed up applications. From now on it is the intention that decisions shall be made at the district office instead of down the street from here in Ottawa. Most of these decisions will be made by the district authority. The applications that are so approved by the district authority will be put into payment immediately, I hope, with less delay than in the past.

**Mr. Fulton:** The recommendations for payment will still have to come to Ottawa?

**Mr. Gregg:** No, they will be paid from the district office.

**Mr. Fulton:** There is authority now in the district office to issue cheques?

**Mr. Gregg:** Yes.

**Mr. Herridge:** Before the section carries I should like to express my approval of it. I think it is an excellent section. I think when it is put into effect we in the province of British Columbia will benefit from it because there has been a certain loss of time owing to the present centralization. That is not the fault of the board. With other members of the house I want to commend the work the board has done. I think the procedure of a travelling board will result in much more benefit to those seeking war veterans allowance. In that way the board will obtain knowledge of the situation across the country and get closer to the veteran and the local situation. It will also standardize procedure, and I can see the advantage of that. I suggest that we would be well advised to watch the

[Mr. Brooks.]