

Veterans Allowance Increases

Act. These are the veterans who become eligible after the age of 60 and are permanently unemployable because of physical or mental disabilities, or who are unable to maintain themselves due to a combination of economic handicaps and physical or mental disabilities and are unlikely to be able to do so. It is worth while mentioning the restrictions on these veterans. A single veteran in this category cannot have assets over \$1,250 and a married veteran cannot have assets over \$2,500.

I would like to show you some of the letters I get, Mr. Speaker, telling me that the veteran or his wife went out to try to earn a little more to buy some extra food or clothing, or to buy a little radio in order to hear about this great Canada and the great things that are coming in the new decade we are entering. Then, they find that what they earned is deducted from their next month's cheque.

Mr. McGrath: Shame.

Mr. Marshall: All that the department has done for these veterans during the past two years I have been in the House has been to cut down the staff of certain district offices which are charged with the responsibility of helping these people and of seeking out those who can qualify for this pittance on reaching this age. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I repeat—bully for the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) when he says a special plea can be made not only for the veterans but for the old and for all sections of society. These people agree, too. Everybody in Canada agrees. They all come under the massive social security report which sits in the office of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) ready to be tabled; and the related legislation sits way down on the list I mentioned before.

So, let us bring forward the legislation on veterans pensions and social security. The special plea of these people is getting louder and louder, Mr. Speaker. So, let us show some humane consideration instead of philosophizing and let us pay attention to the needs of these people.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Marshall: I am sure that the minister will advise us of the exact dates on which the pensions legislation and that relating to income security will be introduced. I hope he will not give us the same answer that the Prime Minister gives when he criticizes the opposition for asking the government to spend money. He answers that if we want the government to pay out more money they will have to raise taxes, and then the opposition will criticize that. Well, in case he is going to use this tale of woe again I will tell him I am not accepting it, because it is a lot of bully beef.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Marshall: In my short period of time in this House, Mr. Speaker, I have learned that money is thrown around

[Mr. Marshall.]

by this government "like it was going out of style", and for some of the strangest things that one could imagine. They are too numerous to mention, but one example would be the giving of grants to town fools. I must say, though, that I did not appreciate the remarks of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) yesterday in the House when I asked, simply and courteously, whether he would advise the House when the legislation on income security, which includes war veterans allowances and the veterans pension legislation, would be presented. His answer, though, is a pretty good indication as to where he stands with regard to veterans. It is obvious that he was one of the six cabinet ministers who vetoed the recommendations of the Minister of National Health and Welfare and directed him to cut his recommended increases to the poor by some \$500 million.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Marshall: I wonder which of the other cabinet ministers were included in the nasty six?

An hon. Member: They are all the same.

Mr. Marshall: There are many items in the Veterans affairs Committee report with which I could deal. I refer to the 100 per cent pensioners; to stabilizing pensions; to benefit of doubt and appeal procedures, and to attendance allowances. Not the least of these matters is the basic rate of pension; but I am sure my colleagues will deal with these adequately. I will close my remarks with this appeal to the government.

I am sure that the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé) would have liked to have brought forward legislation before now. It is apparent that he is deterred by a cabinet which continues to downgrade the department and by the "whiz kids" who prefer to create new departments like Information Canada, which can only be described as a \$7 million money-eating monster to produce political propaganda that nobody wants to hear.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Marshall: There is also an inference to be drawn from the government's spending sums like \$200,000, on art work that kiddies in kindergarten could do better. I only hope, as a result of this debate, that the minister, with the help of many veterans who are members of caucus, will appeal to the government to stand behind the promises made to the 160,000 of the almost 1 million Canadian war veterans. I hope he will do this with the zeal and vigour which he says is being used in the care for veterans, and that legislation will be brought forth, before it is too late to care for many of them.

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, we, on this side of the House, are pleased with the motion that has been brought forward, which gives us the opportunity of reviewing a matter that occupied the attention of