

assistance under the various provisions of the act but also many who were not asking for help but who were trying to help others. It was very interesting to find that not one of these veterans shouted with joy at the announced increases in respect of the disability allowances or pensions. I am sure the minister, and other members on the committee from the government side of the House, must have received some reaction from war veterans in their constituencies and from branches of the various veterans organizations. I would be very pleased to have copies of any letters which were complimentary to these announced increases. I am sure the minister will direct his public relations department to give me a list of those who directed accolades to his department.

Certainly, the recognition by the Legion and the standing ovations the minister received would indicate that the veterans organizations are very happy both about the announced increases and some of the amendments to the veterans legislation arising out of the recommendations in the committee's report. So I can only conclude that there are two distinct groups of veterans in this country of ours. I hope that with more experience I can find out more about this fact of life, so that I may overcome the frustration which has been building up inside me since I occupied a seat of responsibility in Parliament.

Under the War Veterans Allowance Act a single veteran receives \$105 per month. If he will really be happy with \$120.75 a month, then I am wrong, especially when the poverty line recognized by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics indicates that he needs around \$162 per month. If a married veteran receiving the present combined rate of \$175 will now be able to live in this day of inflation on \$201.75 per month, when the Dominion Bureau of Statistics poverty line indicates that the sum of \$270 per month is necessary to clothe and educate his family, then I will admit I am wrong again. It would seem, therefore, that someone with responsibility for disabled veterans is not being too straightforward concerning the objectives. Some persons somewhere with directive capacity, who could bring pressure to bear on the decisions of government are impeded in their thinking. These are the people on whom war veterans depend for their care and welfare.

In this connection, too, I intend to find some answers in the coming months of the session.

For some strange reason this government, until this year of concentrated pressure, has been so bound by its one-track mind concerning what the priorities of this nation really are that it has completely ignored the plight of those burnt-out veterans who receive assistance under the War Veterans Allowance Act and is granting a negligible 15 per cent increase. I say we owe these veterans an increase of at least 4 per cent a year over the past five years to cope with the recognized average increase in the cost of living. This would be 20 per cent. Really, if the government were to follow its own restrictive guideline in respect of increases in wages and prices, the increase should be 6 per cent per year over five years, especially at a time when most of these veterans are in the 75 or over age bracket. I say further that the increases should have been made retroactive for at least

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one year, which is certainly not unreasonable or at least the increases should have been made effective immediately on their announcement.

• (3:50 p.m.)

Why consideration was not given to orphans of veterans and to associated income ceilings is not very easy to understand. Can the orphan or his guardian manage to continue normal care on \$60 a month or, in the case where there are three orphans, on a combined total of \$141 a month?

There are other areas of concern within the War Veterans Allowances Act which must be revised. One of the most important pertains to eligibility. I refer specifically to the section in the act which provides that a veteran must have served in the United Kingdom during world war I for at least 365 days prior to 12 November, 1918, including sailing time between Canada and the United Kingdom. So much could be done for the few veterans in this category who are in the late years of their life if this qualifying period were reduced, even the very few who are restricted by the lack of a few days of service.

There is no reason why consideration should not be given, after so many years, to offering relief to war veterans allowances recipients in the area of casual earnings. I refer in this regard to cases where recipients may have casual earnings of up to \$800 a year for single persons and \$1,200 a year for married persons without their allowances being reduced. We must surely agree that this only deters their initiative and will to live a better life and to provide for their families.

Restriction with regard to farm incomes must also be reviewed, and I hope that these sections in the act will be considered sympathetically when viewed in the context of the proclamations by this government regarding equal opportunity for all Canadians. We know that all the phrases turn out to be only political utterances of computerized thinking without any human feeling.

Before leaving the subject of war veterans allowances, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the newly appointed chairman of the War Veterans Allowances Board, Mr. Don Thompson, who is probably one of the most knowledgeable men in this country in veterans affairs. His knowledge and experience as national secretary of the Dominion Command of the Canadian Legion should stand him in good stead in his appointment, and I sincerely hope that his experience will prove to be of decided advantage to the veterans of this country in his area of responsibility. I hope also that his immersion into bureaucracy will not pollute his thinking in so far as veterans are concerned, and that he will remember forever the contribution he can make in spite of the frustrations he must have experienced during the many years he has served so many war veterans. While I realize the limitations with which he will be faced as chairman of the board, I am sure I speak for all hon. members in wishing him well in his appointment.

I would also like to take this opportunity on behalf of hon. members to offer our sincere appreciation to Colonel W. T. Crompton, the former chairman of the War Veterans