TABLE 7-6.—*Rise in veterans' benefits for 100 percent disability and rise in the cost of living, 1914–54, various years*

	Benefits, total disability	Cost of living
1914	100	100
1919	267	157
1924	333	170
1954	603	263

Sources: Last table and also "Veterans' Benefits in the United States," p. 148.

Benefits do not seem excessive for disabled veterans: $1.4 billion is being paid out to 2 million disabled veterans, or an average of about $700 a year, with monthly payments varying from $17 to $181. The average amount was after all only $700 a year. Nor do the payments to survivors of $400 million to 380,000, or a little more than $1,000 a year, seem excessive.[56]

In one area, of course, there would be substantial loss, and that is the insurance made available to servicemen. In 1955, there were 5,600,000 policies still in force or in waiver status, with a total of $37 billion of national service life insurance.[57] The continued rise in prices since this insurance went into effect does, of course, cut down the benefits substantially.

Finally, there is a good deal said in the veterans' report about the high economic status of veterans, a status that is substantially higher than that of nonveterans. It is also pointed out that the average basic pay plus allowances has varied as follows:

[1918=100]

1865	53
1898	55
1945	187
1952	304
1955	333

The rise in real compensation, and this leaves out of account some special benefits such as medical care, was 86 percent from 1918 to 1955. For enlisted men alone, it was 76 percent.[58] The point made here by the Commission is that the soldiers have been treated well while enlisted and to that extent do not need special compensation. The average basic pay rose from $797 in 1918 for all military personnel to $1,805 in 1955, an increase of 126 percent. This rise is, however, considerably less than the increase of per capita income in the whole population.

PENSION FUNDS

Partly as a result of dissatisfaction with the benefits under old-age survivors and disability insurance programs, workers and their representatives have sought supplementary pension payments through programs supported by their employers and sometimes with contributions by the workers. By the end of 1957, it has been estimated that the number of workers covered by private pension programs total 17.7

[56] Ibid., pp. 50–51.
[57] Ibid., p. 52.
[58] Ibid., pp. 84–85.