

disabilities; and (3) abolition of peacetime rates and substitution of wartime rates of disability compensation.

The Blinded Veterans Association strongly recommends that the survivors of veterans who are permanently and totally disabled as a result of service-connected conditions be entitled to dependency and indemnity compensation regardless of the cause of death. In many instances, it would be difficult to accurately evaluate the impact of the service-connected disability on the death of the veteran. Frequently, the permanently and totally disabled veteran is unable to create a reasonably adequate estate for his survivors because of unemployment or underemployment. Frequently, because of the service-connected disability, adequate insurance is either unavailable or available only at prohibitive rates.

There is precedent for the extension of DIC to the survivors of veterans with permanent and total service-connected disabilities. The benefits of the War Orphans Educational Assistance Act and admission to the service academies have both been extended to the children of such veterans and, as a result of action of the last Congress, educational benefits have been extended to the wives of veterans with permanent and total service-connected disabilities and to their widows.

Canada provides death compensation without distinction as to the cause of death for the widows of veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 50 percent or more. Surely, the United States can provide similar security for the widows of veterans with permanent and total service-connected disabilities.

Canada also grants a surviving widow of such veteran the full amount of his disability compensation for 1 year after his death. We would recommend that the United States institute this procedure as a logical step to assist the widow in adjusting to new financial circumstances.

Dependency allowances should be made more realistic. A Canadian blinded veteran receives \$64 a month for his wife, \$30 for the first dependent child, \$22 for the second, and \$18 for the third and subsequent children. We understand that the Canadian Parliament is expected to increase this amount.

BVA strongly advocates abolition of the peacetime rate of disability compensation so that all servicemen who sustain service-connected disabilities are compensated at the wartime rate. In our time with the need for the United States to maintain large armed forces, peacetime and wartime periods are more a matter of arbitrary dates than actual hostilities. An individual blinded in a training accident during a so-called peacetime period is no less disadvantaged than a serviceman blinded in a similar training accident during a wartime period.

In addition to these recommendations, we should like to call the attention of the committee to several other points in which the Blinded Veterans Association is interested. There are several longstanding inequities in the disability compensation structure for blinded veterans. Although the sense of hearing becomes the principal avenue of information for a blind person for learning, for communication, for orientation, and for mobility, the VA disability rating schedule uses the same criteria for determining percentage of disability for loss of hearing in a blind person as in a sighted person. For many