

Veterans Affairs Committee Report

amount it is prepared to pay if the request is reasonable.

If we can afford more by way of pensions, medical attention, V.L.A. loans and so on, who would vote against those increases? We are less callous in telling the veterans we cannot afford it than is any member of the opposition parties who would hold out false hopes to them. I am thankful for the opportunity to express in the few minutes allotted to me my views on the Woods Committee report and some of its recommendations and, once again, to ask the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé) not to be rushed into a hasty implementation of some of these recommendations.

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, I realize that time is limited; I shall be as rapid as possible. I rise to take part in this debate in gratitude and with profound respect for the gallant men and women who have served as members of the Canadian Armed Forces in fields of conflict around the world. These are men and women who gave their all to bring freedom to an oppressed world and to protect and preserve a heritage they held dear—and one which at one time all Canadians held dear. After listening to some of the remarks made today in the house I wonder whether some of us still do.

It is a heritage which the present generation and this government are allowing to erode. These men and women fought for us all—for those of us who were unable or unwilling to do our own fighting. What have we done for them in return? Very little, I submit.

Fifty-one years ago they were told they had won a war to end all wars. Twenty-four years ago their sons and daughters were told the same thing. These were the promises made by the statesmen of the day: these valiant warriors were to return home to a brighter future and a better life provided by a grateful nation. But it seems the grateful nation suffers either from a defective memory or from a conveniently short one. We are more interested in improving the lot of the hardened criminal, the homosexual and the marxist agitator—and let us not forget the deprived high income earner who, in the Finance Minister's own words, is carrying too heavy a tax load. Millions of dollars are being poured into bilingualism. The government somehow managed to find an amount in excess of \$46 million to finance that cultural centre down the street. It is easy to see there

is federal money for projects dear to the heart of the present government.

We have to economize somewhere though, and that somewhere is in an area not so dear to the government's heart. Veterans pensions, along with old age pensions, civil servants pensions and public housing, apparently fall into this category. There is money available to provide departmental heads with salaries of \$40,000. There appears to be an unlimited source of money to meet the requirements of the Prime Minister's bloated personal staff. Money is available to provide a court jester for the City of Vancouver and to assist in the education of a self-confessed anarchist in Montreal. Money was even made available, as I recall, for a young Canadian to travel to New York City to demonstrate his remarkable talent for smashing pianos. Is the government trying to tell us that the contribution to Canada's wellbeing made by these people is greater than the contribution made by our veterans?

How many times were our servicemen sent into battle ill-equipped by shortcomings in training and experience to endure the hardships of mud and vermin, the horror of seeing one's friends being slaughtered? How many times were they sent into battle with insufficient equipment, insufficient rations and insufficient sleep? They faced these adversities and they faced death or dismemberment without complaint. For those who survived the bombs, the bullets and the bayonets, there remained the uncertainty of a life marred by the effects of tuberculosis, malaria and countless other physical maladies, of broken bodies and broken spirits. They earned a reputation for Canada that people throughout the world still look up to. But that reputation was earned at a heavy price. Thousands of white crosses in far distant lands are testimony to the price which was paid. To the men who lie at rest under those crosses, we can only say thanks for a job well done. But, to those who survived, we can surely offer more tangible proof of our gratitude. These men assured our very presence here today as Members of Parliament. Without their willingness to risk life and limb in the cause of freedom, we would not be here at all, spending the taxpayers' money, disputing the virtues of bilingualism. If we had lost the war the men who might have occupied these seats would have imposed their own language, and French and English would have been rendered as useless as the language of ancient Rome. We sit here in this chamber through the efforts of the men who,