

1½ years to 2½ years—40 per cent

1½ years or less—20 per cent

These awards be over and above any existing pension and we agree with Hermann recommendation No. 3 in principle and we agree with Hermann recommendation No. 4

In conclusion, we wish to thank you for the privilege of presenting our brief—

● (1610)

The percentages which the standing committee placed before this House were a little less than that, but I know from speaking to and corresponding with these groups that they are pleased with what has been suggested to the government for inclusion in the legislation.

Death is taking its toll, Mr. Speaker. If we delay this bill much longer, these men will not be here to enjoy the benefit of any increase in the disability pension that might be forthcoming. The Grim Reaper will come. We plead, on humanitarian grounds, for the government to be generous and do something to help these people while the breath of life is still in them.

If the debate is allowed to continue, I am sure my colleagues will bring forward other points in an attempt to persuade the government to introduce the legislation we seek. If the government should move adjournment of the debate—which I hope will not happen—it will mean they are not prepared to give our veterans what is due to them. Hon. members who are veterans and sat on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs know precisely what we are talking about and I am sure they will support us. They must do their utmost—I am sure they will—to persuade the government not to cut off discussion of this legislation.

Members on all sides should have an opportunity to express their views, so that it is not just the mover of the motion, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, and myself as seconder, placing this matter before the House for proper disposition. The disposition will be, I hope, that debate will be allowed, and not cut off peremptorily. The minister has indicated that he wishes to speak. I hope he will tell us that he has been able to convince his cabinet colleagues that a date will be set for legislation to be brought before the House. I am sure members on all sides would be happy with that.

With all the sincerity I can muster, Mr. Speaker, I urge the government to do something to help these people whom the standing committee unanimously recommended should be rewarded for their suffering as prisoners of war in World War II in the prison camps of western Europe or wherever they may have been incarcerated.

[Translation]

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, before I enter the crux of the subject, I would like first to say that I was very happy to see your wisdom in making your ruling with respect to the consideration of this report. I would like now to point out that you said in your remarks that you did not want to leave the impression that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) was imposing his dictates on the House but I think on several occasions it would be wise to accept the proposals of that hon. member who has the wisdom and the experience of many years spent in this House, and I would like to congratulate him for all the positions or at least part of the

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positions he takes in standing up for those who are in distress.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre as well as the hon. member who seconded him, the hon. member who preceded me, for introducing a bill which I think deserves very special attention. In any event, I pointed out to him on behalf of my party that we welcome deeply the proposals of this bill to provide allowances for all former prisoners of war.

Furthermore, it gives me pleasure to see that the steps called for in this committee report show beyond a doubt that former prisoners of war are entitled to the gratitude and respect of the whole country. In any case, there is no doubt that in the present economic context marked by higher prices affecting all walks of society the passage of those measures is going to help them. Indeed, one cannot ignore the needs of the veteran who must face like all of us and any other citizen the rising cost of living. For that matter, we see from day to day the gradual erosion of the real value of the benefits now being paid by the federal government to veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I would like at this point in my speech to quote a few excerpts from the report by Dr. J. Douglas Hermann which I think are excellent and of very great value. If I may I will quote a few excerpts to sum up the conclusions of that report. First of all, in connection with the number of known deaths among veterans.

Based on known deaths, the death rate since repatriation among Dieppe POW is slightly higher than for the control group and substantially higher than for other POW groups.

Based on known deaths, former prisoners of war showed a significantly higher death rate at an earlier age than control veterans who had not experienced incarceration.

All this, Mr. Speaker, to show that veterans who are former POW suffered a lot more than those who fought on battlefields, because they were deprived of many things, separated from and sometimes forgotten by their own.

The Hermann report says:

On a sub-group basis this tendency was most pronounced for Air Force POW.

Based on known deaths, the Dieppe POW experienced a significantly higher mortality rate from cardiovascular disease in general and ischemic heart disease in particular than any other study group.

As regards pensions:

(a) As a percentage of the original numbers of POW, the Dieppe group at 36 per cent has the highest percentage of any of the study groups on pension. The other groups are fairly uniform, with approximately 22 per cent on pension.

(b) As a percentage of POW groups included in the study, the Dieppe group at 54 per cent has the highest proportion of all study groups on pension. The other groups are close to the Dieppe group with 50 per cent of their numbers on pension.

(c) All POW groups examined show that approximately 80 per cent of their numbers who are pensioned receive pensions below the 48 per cent rate.

As a group, the Dieppe POW were incarcerated longer than any other of the study groups surveyed.

The marital status profile of POW and Controls is approximately the same. Both groups slightly exceed the general population rate with respect to broken families.