

NATO Service Award

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous agreement that the House proceed with motion No. 43 at this time appearing on the order paper in the name of the hon. member for York Centre, and that the preceding motions be stood?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it also agreed that the hon. member for York Centre shall have permission to modify his motion as suggested, to meet the more normal presentation procedure in respect of motions to be adopted in the House?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Bob Kaplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government consider the advisability of taking immediate steps to establish a service award for past and present members of the Canadian armed forces serving in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in recognition of their dedication and high standards, keeping in mind that such awards already exist for members of the Canadian armed forces serving in the United Nations peacekeeping duties and that NATO servicemen deserve the same recognition.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the long session in which we are now engaged has one advantage, at least. It gives so many of us who have had resolutions on the order paper an opportunity to have them come forward for debate. I am delighted to have the opportunity now to bring forward this motion. I am certainly hopeful it will find general support among many members of the House. I am asking that the government consider the advisability of taking immediate steps to establish a service award for past and present members of the Canadian armed forces serving in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in recognition of their dedication and high standards, keeping in mind that such awards already exist for members of the Canadian armed forces serving in the United Nations peacekeeping duties and that NATO servicemen deserve the same recognition.

In my life, unfortunately I have had very little contact with the military, but that changed in the last years since I became a member of parliament representing the Downsview air base, Canada's largest military establishment. Since then I have had a considerable amount of contact with servicemen. I wish to tell hon. members that it is not because of pressure from the servicemen that I am bringing forward this resolution. In fact, there is very considerable reluctance on the part of servicemen to acquire recognition in the form of new medals to be established for bravery or, as in this case, for service. The general view of the military is that one ought to do one's best, but should not particularly press for recognition of those efforts.

We certainly do not want to have a tremendous number of medals established for the Canadian armed forces. There are some countries in which medals are given for practically everything—almost even for recovering from a cold. No one in the armed forces would want to see that degree of proliferation of awards exist in Canada. On the other hand, it seems to me there is an anomaly in that there have been so many awards and types of recognition for other forms of service, while for NATO service no award or recognition presently is given. In that spirit, I put

[Mr. Paproski.]

forward this resolution in the hope that it will meet with the approval of the House.

Honours and decorations are bestowed upon persons by a grateful country to show the high respect due to such persons by reason of their having made some contribution to the common good beyond that required. These usually take the form of a star or a medal which is worn to signify the honour. A number of awards have been available in Canada, historically at least, since 1812. The government of Canada issued awards to Canadian servicemen back as far as 1866 and 1870 during the Fenian raids. They were awarded for service in the Sudan in the period 1884 to 1885. They were awarded for service in the Northwest in 1885, for service in South Africa in the period 1899 to 1902, for overseas service in World War I, and for voluntary service in the period 1939 to 1945.

Subsequently, there has been an award for service in the Korean war which involved service of one day in Korea or 28 days afloat. There is the UN Korea medal, and the UN Emergency Force medal for service on the Egyptian-Israeli border. There are also UN medals available for three months' service in the Congo, 30 days' service in Lebanon, three months' service in New Guinea, six months' service in India and Pakistan, 60 days' service in Yemen, 90 days' service in Cyprus, 90 days' service in India-Pakistan, and 90 days' service in Indochina. Although there are other awards, these are the principal ones. I have described them tonight to make clear to hon. members that a NATO service medal would certainly be within the tradition of our country. In this spirit, and without wanting to take too much time, I would urge hon. members to give support to this resolution.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I should like to say to the mover of this motion that it is in fact one of the more thoughtful things that has been done in this chamber with regard to serving Canadian armed forces personnel during the 10 or 12 years I have been here. I commend him for it. I should like to indicate to him that I take some pride in being a spokesman from this side of the House in support of the motion he has placed before us.

The hon. member has gone through the historic background with some thoroughness and obviously with some concern. He has clearly outlined the precedents for such a motion. It is a matter of regret to many of us that the Department of National Defence, at least the people on the civilian side of the department, did not move in this direction a long time ago. The subject put forward and embraced by this motion, of course, is not new. It is not novel to the hon. member who proposes it.

Although I am sure the hon. member is aware of this, he has presented the motion in a very thoughtful and courteous way. This is the type of motion which we can readily accept. I think the government would be doing a service to the mover, to the chamber and to all Canadians if it were to give this motion and its very worthy subject the consideration it deserves.

There is another aspect of this matter which I think should be mentioned. I hope I do not get away from the subject matter in raising it. I suggest there is a very real question of urgency involved. If the concept is good, let us