

APPENDIX "C"

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS
AFFAIRS

REPORT ON TRIP TO EUROPE

1966

During the session 1966-67, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, in its attempt to gain the greatest efficiency and in order to cope with the problems placed before it, requested permission from the House of Commons to proceed on an informative trip to five European countries, for the following purposes:

1. Tour some of the Canadian war cemeteries and memorials in France, Italy, Holland, Belgium, England, and obtain on the spot information about the work of the Commonwealth War Grave Commission, to whom Canada contributes approximately \$530,000.00 annually.
2. Visit some of the allied battlefields of the two great wars and attend the commemorating ceremonies of the 50th Anniversary of the Somme Battles, as part of an official Canadian delegation.
3. Obtain detailed information about veterans benefits in those countries, to be used as a basis for an eventual general study of the Canadian Pension and Allowance system.
4. Meet the representatives of the Canadian Veterans Association of the United Kingdom; appear at the British Commonwealth Ex-Service League Convention in London, and visit the Headquarters of the World Veterans Federation in Paris.

The trip was very successful and most beneficial to the members of the Committee, who had an exceptional opportunity to expand their knowledge by exchanging views with officials of other countries and foreign veterans associations about the veterans' welfare. Representatives of the Royal Canadian Legion and the Army, Navy and Airforce Veterans Association have accompanied the group and have already expressed publicly their appreciation for the work of the Committee during the trip and for the advisability of such an initiative.

Even though the amount of money received by our war veterans might be higher than

what is given in those European countries, it was the general feeling that the Committee should undertake a more detailed comparative study of the basic philosophy between the different systems. It is not the intention of this report to make a complete analysis, or to underline all the particular points that might have impressed one or another member of the Committee, but it might be useful to pinpoint some of the main items which seemed to arouse greater interest among the group.

In the French system, the presumption described as a particular procedure for eligibility might be an alternative solution to the controversy that does exist in this country as to the interpretation and definition of the "benefit of the doubt" clause. Also, the relation of pension to the salaries of civil servants could represent a first step towards the readjustment of the basic rate and the establishment of an automatic cyclical review of pension rates. Finally, the possibility of benefits over and above the 100% disability has impressed most of us, and it might be worthwhile to examine also more closely the French system of appeal, which includes a double-level jurisdiction and a possibility to appeal to a Supreme Court.

The philosophy behind the British system of pensions differs from the Canadian system, insofar as it relates more directly the total benefit received by the pensioner, to his actual needs. The entitlement to a pension allows the veteran to receive a basic pension, to which are added allowances for: wife, children, education of children, constant attendance need, unemployment, occupational severe disablement, age, wear and tear of clothing, etc.; plus an addition for rank. Members might have some doubts as to the advantage of this system over ours, but a few of us thought that a thorough examination of this allowance system might permit us to evaluate, whether our benefits are related to the real need between one class of pensioner and another. The appeal system in the U.K. is also different from the Canadian version, as it provides for the hearing, by Pensions Appeal tribunals, of appeals against ministry decisions on entitlement and assessment. These tribunals are outside the direct jurisdiction of the ministry and their composition could be an appropriate alternative to that of our Canadian appeal boards.