

Mr. Peterson: The Minister is quite right, Mr. Chairman. It is a period of ten years now. I appreciate very much his support for this representation and I look forward to working with him and his officials in the future in order to be able to accomplish something constructive in this area.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Chairman, like many Hon. Members, I suppose, I find myself in an awkward situation. I had hoped that this Bill would go through the normal process rather than be passed in one day without what I consider to be a very adequate committee study. I believe, like many Hon. Members of Parliament, that we do have individual situations where we would like to get the Government to move on some amendments. Obviously, if we are going to go with the procedure which was outlined earlier, we are not going to have that opportunity.

I also find it unfortunate that the Minister of Veterans Affairs is elsewhere and not in the House at this time. I know where he is and I recognize the importance of those celebrations, however, I do believe that there are a number of veterans and their families who are not receiving full justice from the House of Commons because of the procedure which we are following today.

My own father was one of the people who, I believe, was mistreated by the Department in the past. Both of my parents worked for the Deer Lodge Hospital when it was a Veterans Affairs institute. I used to visit them quite often and I got to meet many veterans who certainly felt that the Government did not have their best interests at heart. I regret that we are passing this legislation so quickly. This is the type of legislation which affects a number of people who very often do not have their concerns raised in the House of Commons.

However, I have a specific question. It is my understanding that people who served in the British Merchant Marine do not qualify for any veterans' assistance in Canada. I was wondering whether the Minister, or his officials who are before us today, could respond to that.

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Chairman, in response to the Hon. Member I would like to say that indeed the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Campbell) is in Europe with an important group of veterans. He is participating in the ceremonies in Normandy. I am sure he would have liked to have been here in the House today to participate in the debate on this Bill. However, I believe that he and all the other veterans who are in Europe will be very happy to learn that Parliament today passed Bill C-39. This Bill will go a long way in helping a number of veterans and their families.

In relation to the Hon. Member's comments, I believe the answer to that is, no, they are not included. I will indeed ask my officials to review this matter and see what could be done in this regard.

Mr. Murphy: Again, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the Minister's response. It is unfortunate that we do not have the "real" Minister—if I may use that term—here today. I recognize where he is and the importance of the occasion. However, I do

believe that with a bit of effort the Government could have arranged its business in such a way that this Bill could have received fairly speedy passage on a day when the Minister was here and when we could have had some opportunity, perhaps, to convince the Minister of the need for amendments such as the one which, obviously, I would want to make in this particular case. I understand that people who served in the Canadian Merchant Marine do qualify for Canadian pensions. I understand that people who served with the British Army and Navy also qualify for Canadian pensions. It is obvious that people who now live in Canada who served in the British Merchant Marine had a very dangerous time of it. Obviously they should be given some consideration. The fact that we are dealing with this legislation quickly and without the Minister here means that we cannot make that type of presentation to the Minister and propose the necessary amendments which, I suspect, the Minister might have even favoured had he been here at this time.

● (1640)

Mr. Ouellet: I share the view of the Hon. Member that the timing of the passage of this legislation is probably a little awkward. I am sure that the Minister of Veterans Affairs would have wished to be here. The Hon. Member is one of the Three Wise Men who decide on the schedule of the House. He sometimes acts as House Leader for his Party with our own House Leader and the Opposition House Leader. Bill C-34, which deals with Labour Code amendments, will come before the House next Monday. It could have come today and Bill C-39 could have come before the House next week. That would have probably satisfied myself and would certainly have satisfied the Minister of Veterans Affairs. That is not the case. I am here today on behalf of the Minister and will be here Monday for my own legislation.

In relation to the specific question of the Hon. Member, I want to remind him that any allied veterans who have resided in Canada for 10 years can qualify. I hope this has not escaped him. Indeed, any allied veterans who have lived in Canada for 10 years can qualify.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 32 inclusive agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported, read the third time and passed.