

### Veterans Affairs

What does that demand? It demands, first, and without any thought of any limits, generous care of the disabled. This has always been given; our hospitals show that. It was recognized following the first great war and a measure of help was given to all the returning men. By the end of the second world war a changing nation and a changing world had assumed new dimensions. Rehabilitation, as the national obligation, and a sound national policy have come to mean helping veterans to establish themselves in civil life in a situation at least as good as they would have had if they had not gone to war. Many of these things have come to pass. Over the years there has grown up a series of principles or guidelines, axioms or truisms—whatever you would like to call them—which have been put together and are known as the veterans' charter. I do not have to read them; we are familiar with them and many of them have been implemented. Credit is due to successive governments which have been in a position to implement legislation for the assistance of veterans. The Minister of Veterans Affairs has performed his part in doing these things.

The present recommendations are another step toward improvement in what is known as the veterans' charter. The report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs was tabled on November 18, 1974—here I am referring to the Hermann report, not to the final report—on the occasion of which the Minister of Veterans Affairs said the following:

On the whole, the government considers that these recommendations should not be accepted, but is withholding its final decision until it receives the report of the standing committee.

One might ask, in all fairness, is the government's present reluctance to introduce legislation due to a decision taken a long time ago that the recommendations in the report were unacceptable? Was sending the report to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs only a form of window-dressing? Surely not. I would not accuse the Minister of Veterans Affairs of being such a hypocrite, but one has the right to raise such a question. The Hermann report was referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs on March 26, 1975, and between April 8 and June 10 six meetings were held to consider the report. Testimony was heard from various veterans and POW associations. The minister attended almost all these meetings and made it clear where his sympathies lay. He told witnesses from the National Prisoners of War Association that he expected one day a recommendation would come to him from the committee which it would be his duty to bring to the government, and I am sure he is doing just that. At that time he said:

And you need not leave here with any fear that I will not bring the recommendation to government, because I am interested in prisoners of war and I am interested in veterans. That is my job, and do not feel one damn bit worried about me supporting you.

We know where the minister stands. It is certainly not the minister we are criticizing but, rather, his cabinet colleagues who will not listen to sweet reason. At the meeting of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs on June 10, the committee unanimously adopted a report on the subject of compensation for ex-prisoners of war which the chairman was instructed to present to the House as the committee's seventh report. It was tabled in the House on June 12. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has

[Mr. Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand).]

put it on the record so it is unnecessary for me to do that.

I want the record to show exactly what it is we are asking, which is certainly not too much. What has happened since then? The subject has been raised many times and each time the reply has been that the matter is under consideration. More recently there have been indications that the government's program of economic restraints is responsible for the lack of legislation on the subject. Surely that is the height of hypocrisy, when we look at some of the frivolous and extravagant spending of this government. It has been brought into sharp focus in the last day or two in the Auditor General's report. Let me quote one or two examples of the type of spending of money which, had it been saved, would have paid for what we are asking.

Statistics Canada paid \$210,000 to a language training school for courses given to selected personnel. Of this amount, \$36,000 was paid under contract guarantee for which no services were received as personnel attendance was below the guaranteed minimum. It was wasted money. The Auditor General goes on to say that in November, 1973, Customs and Excise decided to discontinue supplying excise duty stamps to tobacco manufacturers, with a target date of September 30, 1974. In February, 1974, DSS entered into a contract, on behalf of Customs and Excise, to supply tobacco stamps for six months, with flexibility provided. Customs and Excise purchased \$112,000 worth of stamps over and above the contract amount without the involvement of DSS. That is another example of waste. I could go on and on. *Maclean's* magazine, in its December issue, had some glaring examples of government waste.

I say that it is hypocrisy for the government to say that they have not brought forth this legislation because of the program of restraint. As I have said, I could mention many other examples of government waste but I will not take the time of the House to do that. I should mention the many times we received the evasive answers to which I referred from the government House leader and the Minister of Veterans Affairs, saying it would be brought forward soon, it was under consideration, and so on. All these replies have been documented and I am sure my colleagues will be speaking about that matter further if they have the opportunity to participate in this debate.

I think the big argument here is the restraint program on which the government is embarking, and the fact that it is using that program as an excuse, or a red herring, not to implement the very reasonable provisions for which we are asking. I think I should put on the record, also, exactly what the National Prisoners of War Association had to say in their brief before the standing committee. I shall read from issue No. 16 of the *Minutes of Proceedings* of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs of Tuesday, April 15, 1975, page 16:14. It reads as follows:

The National Prisoners of War Association proposes, in order to implement recommendations 1 and 2 of Dr. Hermann's report that:

By new legislation or by amendments to the Pension Act, special compensation be paid to those members of the armed forces and the merchant marine who were prisoners of war in Europe. These awards would be based on the number of years of incarceration as follows:

2½ years or more—50 per cent