

Veterans Allowance Increases

The least we can do for the deceased veteran is to remove as much stress and strain from the family he left as is possible. We have splendid legislation and only recently made amendments to the Children of War Dead Act. This is a good piece of legislation. We also have to recognize that among all too many veterans there is an apathy. I say this is an apathy, not laziness. Our most sophisticated medical opinion has now given recognition to this fact. It is abundantly clear now that men who suffer from this kind of apathy do so usually because of the service they performed during the war years or as a result of the effects of their incarceration as prisoners of war. We must also not forget those who are less capable of earning a living as a result of injuries suffered during the war.

It is my feeling that if a veteran is to be helped he must be helped by the members in this House. Veterans have a splendid record of self-help through funds established to assist those who are temporarily financially embarrassed or who need immediate cash assistance. This, at best, is a stopgap measure and the kind of thing that should never be necessary. To date the veterans groups have accepted their responsibility through the presentation of their brief to the committee. The Legion groups have, in addition, a scheme for calling the Members of Parliament before their various meetings to speak to them. They invariably ask us this question each and every time: Mr. Member of Parliament, what have you done for me lately? It is my hope that after this legislation there will be a regrouping so that other gaps in the legislation may be plugged.

We must always be vigilant to the needs of veterans. We in this House of all people have an obligation not to short change the veteran or, as the poem says, "We will not break faith with those who died". We will and we must remember the veterans. It was surprising for me to hear that Canada had no prisoner of war association. I appreciate there is the Hong Kong veterans group and also the Dieppe and POW veterans organization. There is no POW association as such.

The Hong Kong veterans position, as so clearly pointed out by the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. MacRae), was such that they did not need a large association. Their plight was so obvious the public recognized that they must be helped by the government. The Dieppe and POW associations have endeavoured in the past to have medical examinations conducted to ascertain if there was a pattern of illness running through these particular veterans. About 1,600 medical records were studied by the Department of Veterans Affairs. We seem to forget, when talking about POWs, that the Dieppe POWs were roped and later chained for a period of one year. There was always the possibility in their minds that they might not come out of it alive. Toward the end of their incarceration, a number of them were forced to go on long marches. One of the veterans who appeared before our committee told us of a 700 mile forced march.

The reason I comment on the necessity for a prisoner of war association is that during their incarceration there were no medical records kept for these prisoners. It is for

[Mr. Cullen.]

this reason I should like to see the benefit of the doubt clause exercised in favour of these veterans.

There is one more point I should like to leave with the House, Mr. Speaker. Somehow we have to get through to the younger generation, that generation after mine. I was not old enough to serve in the second world war and my heroes were not Rocket Richard, Gordie Howe and other hockey players. My heroes were Colonel Merritt and those who served in Canada's forces. Somehow we have to get through to the younger generation which has never known war, but some of whom are the most violent protesters, that veterans do not glorify war. When they attend services on November 11 they are paying tribute to brave comrades, dead and alive and the strongest anti-war sentiment is expressed by those who participated in war. I was surprised and disturbed to hear that in some areas thought has been given to creating a civil disturbance during the Remembrance Day parade when those veterans are paying tribute to dead comrades. I hope these misguided individuals will not be carried to that extreme. I hope they will appreciate that through this kind of remembrance the veterans are not glorifying war but are pointing to the horrors of war.

In summary I want to say this. We must not lose sight of the need for priority for veterans. They were successful before our committee. They were persuasive in their arguments and they made many of us change our point of view. The democratic process worked. Legislation is required soon. I have every confidence in the present Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé); I am sure he will take this action and take it in a hurry. If he is in doubt about this I would plead with him to rid himself of this doubt and bring before this country the kind of legislation the veterans have urged.

In the *National Legion News* for June, following the report of the committee, these comments were made:

The long-awaited parliamentary committee recommendations on the Woods committee report have won warm approval from Canada's veterans.

The report of the committee of veterans affairs, presented Monday in the House, embraced many of the recommendations of the original Woods report. The newly elected president of the Royal Canadian Legion, Judge Redmond Roche, Montreal, described it as a "significant step forward in the restructuring of Canada's pension program for veterans".

He termed it a most helpful document which should form the basis of new legislation which will bring about long sought improvements in veterans' pensions.

This is my concluding word. Judge Roche, speaking on behalf of the 11 national veterans organizations, has expressed hope that the government will proceed with the drafting of new legislation based on the report.

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, may I say, in rising to speak on this most important motion before us, that I intend to be exceedingly brief. Members who have spoken before me have fully and adequately conveyed almost all my thoughts and sentiments on matters affecting the veterans of this country. May I say that about the only thing with which I disagree, is the confidence in the Minister of Veterans