

Income Tax

consider a redefinition of alcoholism as a sickness and the treatment of certain people who are afflicted in this way.

Once again, returning to the idea involving income support, it continues to set this country above all others in terms of the quality of benefits extended to veterans and to their dependants. However, circumstances and times change. The legislation which we thought was letter perfect a couple of years ago requires further review today. I agree with the Hon. Members who have already spoken. The War Veterans Allowance has retained its basic compensation features as opposed to a strict welfare orientation, and has done so visibly in becoming a leading income-tested, as opposed to means-tested, program.

Mr. McCain: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder whether the Hon. Member would entertain a very brief question. If he is so supportive of veterans and the motion, why does he not sit down and let it pass?

Mr. Parent: If the Minister or the Hon. Member—God forbid that he should ever become a Minister—means that I should give my place so that someone else can speak, I suggest—

Mr. McCain: Let it pass.

Mr. Mitges: You are not sincere.

Mr. Parent:—that I indeed have something to say, which I want to share, and I thought we were all alike in being afforded an opportunity to express our opinions. However, to go along with his suggestion, if he will bear with me for another 60 seconds, I will indeed give my place to the Hon. Member if he would like to stand and speak in his place.

I conclude by saying that the War Veterans Allowance has retained its basic compensation features as opposed to a strict welfare orientation and has done so visibly in becoming a leading income-tested, as opposed to a means-tested program. Circumstances are changing and, for those reasons, the whole of the War Veterans Allowance Act and the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act is under yet another review. I think that this augurs well for us because in so doing we are keeping ourselves abreast of changes and hopefully we will be able to bring about legislation which will be beneficial to our veterans.

Mr. Lambert: Other than indicating my support for the motion, I will abide by the suggestion of our colleague, the Hon. Member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. McCain) and sit down. I wish to support the motion. I thank Hon. Members who have spoken, inasmuch as Hon. Members have served in World War II. Many changes could be brought about and we could discuss them at length, but as I have stated my support for the motion, I will now sit down.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérald Laniel (Beauharnois-Salaberry): Mr. Speaker, I did not quite hear what the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-

Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie) said, but I hope he is not accusing me of having ulterior motives as far as veterans are concerned.

Mr. Speaker, during the debate this afternoon, Hon. Members all showed an interest in the cause of our veterans—those who went overseas during the two World Wars and the Korean War to fight for democracy—and I for one have always done so. During the twenty years I have been a Member of this House, I have always been a Member of this Committee. I was Chairman when the Committee considered the Woods Report and changed the interpretation of the benefit of the doubt to favour veterans. I was still Chairman when we made specific recommendations regarding the Hong Kong prisoners of war, which paved the way for another decision which, I agree, may not have been sufficiently generous to other ex-prisoners of war, including those who were at Dieppe and others who were taken prisoner in Europe. I want to say that I am speaking not only as a veteran who has not forgotten his former comrades in arms but also as a Member of this House who for twenty years has shown a special interest in veterans affairs and has done everything in his power to make Government legislation concerning the Pension Commission or the War Veterans Allowance Board more generous to those who sacrificed several years of their lives and came back marked by those years.

Mr. Speaker, I think we should seriously consider—the subject has not yet been mentioned in the House this afternoon—what the veterans allowance actually is. The veterans allowance was established to help those who were affected by the war, either psychologically or physically, without being able to prove this was a direct consequence of battle or their participation in armed conflict, either in the air, on sea or on land, in other words, without being able to prove that they were wounded or had to be taken to hospital and receive treatment, which entitles them to a pension several years later. The veterans allowance, which has been and is still called the burnt out pension, was established for those who were affected, psychologically more than anything else, by the war, and who have required special help from the Government to continue to lead a normal life, raise children, live happily with their wives and without the embarrassment of, for instance, having to pick up welfare payments.

Mr. Speaker, the veterans allowance is not for the rich. It was meant to help those who are in financial need. There are certain requirements as to military service for receiving the allowance. A veteran must at least have served long enough that his psychological or financial difficulties in future years may be directly or indirectly related to his military service. However, this allowance is a substitute for the income that he cannot earn to raise his family and support his children and his wife. We have been told that it is shameful to set a \$100 ceiling on the interests that a veteran can receive without affecting his allowance. It may be true that a ceiling of \$100 is not high enough, and I personally agree. On the other hand,