

Income Tax Act

tonight, establishing an extra income tax deduction for war veterans may not appear needed or even appropriate.

Such a deduction that needless to say would reduce employment, business or investment income would favour war veterans to the detriment of other Canadian taxpayers who might be just as deserving.

Nonetheless, it is not to be ruled out that the Government might increase its help to War Veterans. Simply, it does not seem appropriate that such additional help be provided through the tax legislation. The Minister of Veterans Affairs is best able to identify and dispense help to war veterans in need. That role should not be relinquished to the Minister of National Revenue.

Mr. Speaker, this measure is quite in keeping with this Government's leitmotiv, which is to help the people most in need, which means unfortunately that we have to mitigate the benefits extended to those who are less in need.

● (1830)

What the Hon. Member for Hull—Aylmer (Mr. Isabelle) is proposing would afford an advantage to people with high incomes and little advantage, if any, to people with no income. This is in total conflict with any social measure one can imagine. We believe that those in need, including veterans, are not getting enough compared to what they have contributed.

However, we must realize that we will certainly not give more to those who are most in need by collecting less revenue from those who are able to pay.

So, given all these considerations and with due regard and compassion, of course, for these brave fighting men and those who sustained their action away from the front lines, we believe that this motion should not be encouraged by our Government since it is almost anti-social and would certainly not help those who need it most.

[*English*]

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I want to congratulate the Hon. Member for Hull—Aylmer (Mr. Isabelle) for giving the House an opportunity to discuss matters affecting Canada's veterans. All too often the House does not have an opportunity to discuss policy matters as they affect those individuals who, at great personal sacrifice, fought for Canada and world freedom, especially in the last two major wars.

I have been associated with the Hon. Member for Hull—Aylmer for quite a number of years through our joint activity on the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. I know he brings a great deal of knowledge and experience to this debate. I have a tremendous amount of respect for the Hon. Member and for the effort, energy, and enthusiasm which he puts into those matters affecting Canadian veterans.

As I understand it, the intent of the motion of the Hon. Member is to provide a benefit through the Income Tax Act to

those Canadians who served in Canada's Armed Forces in time of war. As I understand it, this benefit would be in the form of a tax credit and would be designed to give recognition to those Canadians for the sacrifice they made on Canada's behalf during wartime.

As will undoubtedly be pointed out in the course of this debate, those veterans who were wounded during the war, suffered through illness as a result of wartime experience, or were prisoners of war, will have benefits available to them under various programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I understand that this motion would provide a degree of recognition to those Canadians who were not prisoners of war and do not receive any other additional benefits under the various programs provided by the existing veterans legislation. The Hon. Member for Hull—Aylmer is attempting to tell those veterans that while fortunately they are ineligible to become a recipient as a result of a war injury, illness or of being a prisoner of war, the federal Government and indeed Parliament wants to extend an extra recognition to them for the service they gave to the country during periods of armed conflict. In that sense, I think it behoves all of us to give full consideration to the sentiments being advanced by the Hon. Member for Hull—Aylmer.

The Hon. Member, like myself, is not a tax accountant by any means. We are simply Members of the House who want to recognize the value that a number of Canadians have given to this country over the years. We are interested in the sentiment and recognition expressed in the motion.

● (1840)

The motion also gives us an opportunity to examine how we are treating a number of others in our veteran population. There is some urgency to the Hon. Member's motion that we give some additional recognition when we consider that Canada's veteran population is declining at a rate of some 25,000 a year.

I am sure the Hon. Member who moved the motion does not want to leave the impression that nothing is being done because I have heard him say on many occasions that all of us appreciate the efforts of the present Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Hees) to the pressing problems facing our veterans. In fact, I have said in the House that since I came here in 1980 I do not know of any other Minister of Veterans Affairs who has moved so quickly in such a short period of time to resolve many of the outstanding problems facing veterans, even going back to the 1914-18 war.

I could not believe it when one of the first pieces of legislation the Minister of Veterans Affairs introduced in the House corrected a grievance that had existed since the 1914-18 war. Numerous delegations from the Canadian Legion appeared before the Veterans Affairs Committee over the years to seek correction of that injustice. The Minister took that action. I do