

Income Tax

and an additional allowance may be paid on behalf of dependent children.

Again I come back to the theme of the fairness and the generosity of the Allowances Acts as they were set up. The War Veterans Allowance Act and the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act are a form of financial assistance intended to ensure that a qualified recipient's income does not fall below a certain level specified under the legislation. As an income-support program, it forms part of Canada's social assistance legislation. In common with other such programs, all other income must be taken into consideration in determining eligibility for the allowance and the amount at which it may be paid.

In order to make this whole picture of War Veterans Allowance a little clearer, I think it would be wise to review the circumstances under which this whole package of legislation evolved so that we can put this particular proposal from the Hon. Member for St. Catharines into its proper perspective.

During the First World War, and during 1917 more specifically, just before the Battle of Vimy Ridge, Prime Minister Borden spoke to the Canadian troops. He is quoted as saying:

The Government and the country will consider it their duty to see that a proper appreciation of your efforts and of your courage is brought to the notice of your people at home, and that no man, whether he goes back or whether he remains in Flanders, will have just cause to reproach the Government for having broken faith with the men who won and the men who died.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, four or five years ago I went to Vimy to represent Canada on November 11. I had the great honour of speaking on behalf of our country about the soldiers who were wounded in battle and those who died on the battlefield. We must never forget the tremendous sacrifice made by these men so many years ago. I also would like the House to know, Mr. Speaker, that my father was one of the soldiers who fought over there, and today, in the House.

[English]

We have in the galleries another veteran of the Second World War who followed my father's footsteps. He is my brother, Gerald Parent, who was an Air Force pilot. I am happy that he is here today to listen to us discuss these matters about the veterans. Both he and my father are veterans. Like all veterans, I believe they performed their duty well in adverse circumstances, and it is to them that we owe many thanks.

The next 23 years after 1917 was an extremely significant time with respect to the establishment of administrative and adjudicatory bodies with responsibility to veterans and their dependants. The War Veterans Allowance Act was approved in 1930 and was administered by the War Veterans Allowance Committee. In 1936, the War Veterans Allowance Board, as we know it today, was established. Ever since that year we have witnessed countless amendments which improved the War Veterans Allowance Act. They were amendments which lived up to the expectations of what this Act was all about and

what was referred to by the then Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, when he said:

This legislation represents an attempt to recognize a service upon which no price can ever be placed. Those whose services are involved have not thought of their duty as being something which would entail a monetary reward, but it is an acknowledgement of the burdens borne and sacrifices endured.

● (1710)

The most recent major adjustment to veterans legislation was enacted in this House on July 17, 1980. The Hon. Member for Edmonton West will remember when Bill C-40, the statute law called the Military and Civilian War Pensions Compensation and Allowances Amendments Act, received Royal Assent. He was present on that day.

Amendments to the Pension Act and the compensation for former prisoners of war extended benefits to widows and surviving dependent children of disabled pensioners or former prisoners of war not eligible under the existing Act. Amendments to the War Veterans Allowance and Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act included a revised benefit structure. Other changes in pension and allowance legislation were aimed at removing specific inequities, disparities or anomalies. In short, major revision of the War Veterans Act and the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act were contemplated and put into place.

Clearly, the philosophy and policy of successive Governments has been to recognize the sacrifices made by Canadian men and women in the defence of Canada by establishing separate legislation which would recognize this group of Canadians as being special among the total population. There is no one in the House who could possibly question the fact that these men and women are indeed special to all of us.

From its inception, a hallmark of veterans' legislation has been its responsiveness to changing circumstances. That is why the suggestion which is being brought forth today is one which should surely be considered by all Hon. Members in the House.

Veterans' legislation has also served to pioneer new ideas respecting income support, compensation and social rehabilitation and support programs for Canada. The Hon. Member speaking for the New Democratic Party mentioned a little earlier that one of the rehabilitation programs being considered, as a matter of fact, concerned alcoholism. This was studied by the committee which was set up to consider the disabilities of Canadians and bring about legislation to deal with them. I would venture to say that alcoholism per se is no greater a problem among veterans than it is among any other groups. Yet if we were to consider some of the causes of alcoholism, we might find that they could indeed be traced to the fact that these men were in combat or under adverse conditions during the war. As a result, in some circumstances they have taken to drink. I think that we as Parliamentarians, as Canadians, would want to say that we in turn should now be our brother's keeper in trying to help veterans to cope with this disease, this illness, which is recognized as such. I accept the recommendation of the Hon. Member that we should possibly