

Veterans Affairs Committee Report

able to sit in this house and govern, who are responsible for the fact that 20 million Canadians are able to live in peace and comparative prosperity, the government has the unadulterated gall to tell the opposition and the nation that we cannot afford it.

I do not know what the 20 million people of this country believe, Mr. Speaker, but I do know there are 961,000 veterans who do not believe it. I know that the Royal Canadian Legion does not believe it, and I know that the war pensioners of Canada do not believe it. Neither do the Hong Kong veterans, the Army, Navy and Air Force veterans, the War Amputees of Canada, or the many other organizations which have submitted briefs to all Members of Parliament as well as to the Minister of Veterans Affairs pleading that the Woods committee report be referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and wondering what happened to the white paper which was to have been produced.

The Woods committee report has been completed since March of 1968, well over a year ago, in both official languages; yet we continue to receive evasive answers to our questions about it and to experience procrastination covered by the excuse that it is being studied with care so that excellent results may be achieved. What kind of camouflage is this, Mr. Speaker? What is the government trying to hide behind? It is hiding behind priorities, its own narrow version of priorities.

The veterans of this nation do not want any handouts. They had the guts to fight and they have the guts to play their part in providing for themselves after years of sacrifice. They do not want to depend on anyone for a living, least of all upon the government. But there are many thousands of veterans who must look to us for help, even though they do not want to, because they had the misfortune to be disabled or incapacitated and cannot provide for themselves through no fault of their own. There are many thousands of veterans who have returned from wars, re-entered our society with a determination to catch up, and have become successful and prosperous. There are also many thousands of war veterans who, in addition to making their way in our society, have taken time to care for those who need support and guidance, realizing that they themselves might have been disabled. There are even veterans who, having taken their place in our society, have become Members of Parliament and sit on both sides of this house charged with the responsibility

of governing for the betterment of all Canadians. Some of these good Canadians sit opposite, and I can understand their dismay and disillusionment at the attitude of the establishment in dealing with the needs of veterans.

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs is one of the many committees that perform their duties without publicity and in an absence of controversy. It carries out its duties without fanfare because regardless of partisan politics its members are veterans in the main and have one purpose or objective in mind—to help their comrades who need help. They are willing to forgo attention because whether they are Liberal, Conservative, N.D.P. or Créditiste they have one thing in mind, the welfare of their comrades who defended this country of ours.

I feel it is appropriate at this time, when I am speaking about the contribution made by the veterans of Canada, to say something on the subject of national unity, because it is obvious that we in Canada tend to forget just what a solid base we have built in the word "Canadian". Here we are, with almost a year completed in the present session of parliament, and it is important that we look back to see what has been accomplished by the government in this area.

First of all, some of the inner circle went junketing to Latin America on a mission to improve trade and create good international relations. And after spending hundreds of millions of dollars, where do we stand? Why don't we ask the United States where they stand in Latin America after spending vast sums there? They cannot even send Governor Rockefeller there on a good will tour without fear for his life. I notice there are not too many members present on the benches opposite during our discussion of this important question of veterans affairs.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Marshall: We have lots of money for foreign aid, but we have no money for war veterans. They are laughing at us in foreign countries for our determination to help while five million of our own poverty-stricken citizens go without. I am reminded of the story told by a comedian on the Ed Sullivan show who said that the best business in the world today is the foreign aid business. "Just find an island", he said, "give it a name and then go to the United States or Canada and ask for foreign aid and you will get millions without any question whatsoever."