

Veterans Affairs Committee Report

Mr. Jack Cullen (Sarnia): Mr. Speaker, I say at the outset that I am not a veteran. I mention this simply to indicate that I have no personal axe to grind. Those who did not serve in the armed forces have a tendency to be impatient with those who did, because we cannot share their comradeship born out of wartime service, sacrifice and association. I share no such impatience. A veteran can bend my ear at any time, on any subject, at any place, and I am flattered to say that some veterans do. I think this arises in part out of my maiden speech, which was given some publicity in so far as veterans associations are concerned, and also the articles I have from time to time written in veterans publications.

• (3:40 p.m.)

When the Dieppe Prisoner of War Association recently met with the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé), I made a point of being present to hear and support the brief they presented. All too often we feel, when dealing with this great juggernaut called government, that there is little purpose in preparing briefs or attending meetings with ministers. Fortunately, the Dieppe P.O.W. Association received a splendid hearing, and the minister undertook to examine a representative number of files to determine if there is a disability common to the Dieppe ex-prisoners of war. The men presenting the brief undertook to provide the minister with a list of the men on their roster. It was gratifying to me personally to find that the list sent by the Dieppe P.O.W.'s was sent to my office for presentation to the minister. Arising directly out of that particular meeting, more than 800 files of Dieppe ex-prisoners of war have been examined and a catalogue of complaints and ailments has been made. I do not know the results of the report but it is gratifying to know that there is a minister who will listen to the veterans of this country.

This interest that I have in veterans affairs is born, I suppose, out of a lifetime of brain-washing because my father saw service in both world wars; in the first one in the Royal Naval Air Service and in the second war in the Royal Canadian Air Force as a squadron leader. One would have thought that this would have been enough, yet he saw fit to join the Department of Veterans Affairs and to give 20 years of service to it. Just before his retirement, he worked as a district administrator for D.V.A. I know the house will pardon this personal reference, but, I hope the house can appreciate it is as a result of this background that my concern for the rights

[Mr. Thomas (Moncton).]

of veterans arises. Party loyalty will not divert me from this concern.

High on my list of sources of information dealing with veterans is the magazine *Legion*. I commend to the attention of all hon. members the February 1969 issue. Pages 13 to 22 of that issue contain an excellent treatise or summary or, as the magazine puts it, "a simplified outline of the facts supporting the recommendations made by Mr. Justice Woods and his committee". This should be required reading for all members of the Veterans Affairs Committee and, most assuredly, required reading for all officials in the Department of Veterans Affairs as well as for the minister himself.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): We could put it in *Hansard*.

Mr. Cullen: I have a copy here also. In my considered opinion, no veteran of any war has received more attention, more consideration, better hospital care or more assistance in training for work and in seeking employment, or more financial help toward an education or toward building a home, than has the Canadian veteran. I do not say this to provoke an argument. I say it primarily because I think it is true, but also because I want to add that we can and always should be looking for ways to do more for the Canadian veteran.

The *Legion* magazine states in part as follows:

Months in preparation, meticulous in detail, bristling with 148 recommendations, the Woods report was hailed as a momentous production when it appeared last March.

This report is contained in three volumes in excess of 1,300 pages. The pages overflow with wisdom, and there is little doubt that the survey of the organization and the work of the pension commission results in many outstanding recommendations which, if implemented, would be of considerable long term value to veterans and their dependants.

The *Legion* and 10 other national veterans' associations met at least three times to discuss this report. While some groups are more concerned than others with the specific aspects of the report, there is unanimity in that they all support the report and urge its implementation. I say, "Amen", to that, but I have a lawyer's qualification. I think early implementation is great, but I do not want to see hasty implementation. I am unalterably opposed to it, whether it be for political advantage or whether it be to remove the