

**Mr. Gauthier:** I understand that, Mr. Chairman. But there are prisoners of war from Hong Kong who were under the Japanese responsibility and there are also the Dieppe people, the number of which I take it was a guesstimate. And "all others" means those from the Korean War or any others.

**Mr. Hees:** That is correct, Mr. Chairman.

**Ms. Copps:** Mr. Chairman, I have a question about the Army Benevolent Fund Act. The amendments being suggested affect Clause 1, subsections 5(1) and (2). Does the Army Benevolent Fund Act in this instance deal only with applications that may come from former prisoners of war or are these amendments applying to the general premises of the fund as a whole?

**The Chairman:** Is the Hon. Member asking a question on Clause 1?

**Ms. Copps:** No, Mr. Chairman, it was a general question about the Act. I was confused as to whether the Act was able to be used for former prisoners of war only in this Bill or whether it was for children and all other widows et cetera.

**The Chairman:** I regret to tell the Hon. Member but we are on Clause 5. Could she relate her question to Clause 5, please?

**Ms. Copps:** I understand that, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Hees:** Mr. Chairman, could I assume that the Hon. Member has found some way to include her question in Clause 5, which I would like to answer? There is no restriction on applications. They come from all veterans, not just prisoners of war.

**Ms. Copps:** Mr. Chairman, with the benevolence of the Minister who has agreed to give me some clarification, I have some concerns dealing with a couple of specific instances where the fund was not able to be used. For example, in the case of a funeral of a suicide victim. Apparently this is contrary to army regulation potentially and the Army Benevolent Fund Act in some cases should have more involvement in the social service component of the Armed Forces.

What regulations are there? I had an instance and I was able to get it resolved, but a constituent who had committed suicide could not be buried by the army because of the suicide. It was deemed that the constituent had gone AWOL. What provisions are there in this Army Benevolent Fund Act?

**Mr. Hees:** Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the Army Benevolent Fund sets its own regulations. I do not. If there is need for clarification or the Hon. Member or any Hon. Members feel that any cases of any kind have not been fairly treated, perhaps they could get in touch with me, or send me a letter and I will look into them and see what we can do. I am just as keen as the Hon. Member, and all Hon. Members, to see that these cases be dealt with fairly.

● (1750)

Clauses 5 to 18 inclusive agreed to.

*Army Benevolent Fund Act and Related Acts*

Title agreed to.

Bill reported.

**Mr. Hees** moved that the Bill be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr. Hees** moved that the Bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before the Bill passes I would like to thank members of the Opposition who have taken part in this debate for their very constructive, thoughtful and generous attitude. We have gained considerably from a number of good suggestions of theirs and I appreciate very much their attitude and the constructive help they have given me today.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to follow up on some of the questions that the Minister was kind enough to entertain in Committee of the Whole on the Army Benevolent Fund Act. He said that if we have specific problems in this regard, we can appeal to him directly. The difficulty with that process, which we might consider changing by more specific regulations, is that in many cases the ordinary citizen is not aware of his or her right of appeal to the Minister. In the case I cited, luckily I was able to convince the authorities without having to go to the Minister. A constituent was suffering from a form of mental disorder which precipitated his going AWOL. He subsequently committed suicide. The government official I contacted said that his funeral would not be paid for because he had killed himself while AWOL. Through negotiations with the military, I was able to come to a specific resolution of this issue. However, it was necessary for me to phone a Major involved in the issue and suggest that he might not like to see it raised on the floor of the House of Commons.

Because the person involved was single, his mother had to pay for the funeral. She came to me about it some months later. Eventually the Army Benevolent Fund Act was in a position to pay for this funeral, but what would have happened had the mother not persisted and been advised to come and see me? Quite clearly there is still a policy with respect to individuals going AWOL. If they do, they lose all their benefits, even to the point where they would be refused the cost of burial. It is important that there be a right of appeal so that people like this deceased man's mother know they have recourse. Someone finally put her in touch with me and we were able to resolve the problem. However, in many instances the people concerned would not pursue it because obviously a suicide is a difficult thing for any family. There should be some automatic process of appeal in the Act and it should be better advertised.

**Mr. Hees:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member has brought up a very good point. I commend her for taking the stand she did. It is the kind of thing I would have urged had it been brought to my attention. I am glad she had the initiative and was able to fight it through.