

general pattern, there must be some very exceptional circumstances before they can be accommodated.

The few I am talking about in relation to this bill are those people who, in some cases because of luck, or their own efforts, succeeded in avoiding capture and becoming prisoners of war. More important still is that small group who were prisoners of war for a period of time and escaped and made their way back to allied territory. I do not know what the number is of those who served in the navy or the army of Canada, but those who served in the air force and escaped successfully number perhaps 150 or 200 at the outside. They are the exceptions, and are not covered by this bill. They should be covered, and I hope when the bill goes to the committee this matter will be looked into with the possibility of amending the definition of a former prisoner of war to include those who had been prisoners of war, escaped, and were in enemy territory on occasion for long periods of time.

I have a friend who was in the RCAF, was shot down, was captured, and became a prisoner of war. He escaped three times from prisoner of war camps. The third time he avoided recapture. The only way he could do this was to move to the east. He eventually arrived in Poland and commenced fighting with the Polish underground, and continued to do so for some two years. As I read this bill he would not qualify unless he was a prisoner of war for a certain length of time before his escape.

There are many others who were never prisoners of war for very long but escaped and avoided recapture. Many were shot down and were never captured. They were in enemy occupied countries for long periods of time under very difficult conditions, and at very high risk to themselves and to the people helping them. They were often living under very bad conditions when food was minimal. That period of their service is a complete blank as far as their medical documents are concerned.

Some of these individuals were wounded, injured, and stayed with friends in the underground or members of escape organizations, or perhaps with just individuals on whose mercy they had thrown themselves. At very great risk they were nursed back to a sufficient level of health so that they were able to move on.

It is very unreasonable to exclude this small group of people. I do not know how many there would be in all services, but perhaps 500 at the most. In this situation these exceptions should be taken care of by this legislation. They should have been treated in the same way as others who had the misfortune to be prisoners until the end of the war.

After all, as everybody who served in the service is aware, one of your obligations was to try to escape if taken prisoner. That was one of your obligations and duties. We now have a situation in which a fellow is disqualified because he was able to fulfil that duty by escaping successfully, at great risk to himself, and in some cases after months making it back to allied territory to serve again. To me this borders on the outrageous. The very least that can be said about it is that it is an injustice. The only reason I know of that they are not included is that they represent an awkward exception to the general rule. They do not fit conveniently into the category of those who were made prisoner of war and remained so until the war was over.

Royal Assent

I see it is six o'clock. That is all I wanted to say on this bill now, Mr. Speaker.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, earlier today the government House leader said that if Bill C-92 were not concluded by six o'clock it would be called again during government time on Thursday. Would he tell us now whether it will be the first item of business on Thursday?

Mr. Sharp: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I would not call any other government bill before this. It will be the first bill, but I cannot say it will be the only business.

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MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate have passed the following bills:

Bill C-90, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 1976.

Bill C-91, an act for the granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 1977.

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[Translation]

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the following communication has been received:

Government House
Ottawa

30 March, 1976

Sir:

I have the honour to inform you that the Hon. Jean Beetz, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate Chamber today, the 30th day of March, at 9.45 p.m. for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to certain bills.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,
Edmond Joly de Lotbinière,
Administrative Secretary
to the Governor General.