

then be able to sing the following verse from Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*:

We are peers of the highest station
Paragons of legislation
Pillars of the British nation

There is a further part to my speech, which I am prepared to delay until another occasion.

On motion of Senator Riel, debate adjourned.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
AUTHORIZED TO REVIEW SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT
ENTITLED "THEY SERVED—WE CARE"

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Marshall, seconded by the Honourable Senator Bielish:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology be authorized to review and update the recommendations contained in the Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science, entitled: "They Served—We Care", tabled in the Senate on 20th October, 1981, and to enquire into any matter related thereto; and

That the papers and evidence taken on the subject and the work accomplished during the First Session of the Thirty-second Parliament be referred to the Committee.—(*Honourable Senator Bonnell*).

Hon. M. Lorne Bonnell: Honourable senators, I shall try to conclude my remarks today; otherwise I shall seek permission to adjourn the debate—which I hope will not be on division.

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): For you, senator, anything goes.

An Hon. Senator: Be concise.

Senator Bonnell: The reason for my speaking today is to support the worthwhile motion of my colleague, Senator Marshall. Senator Marshall spoke about the great things that the Standing Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science had done in the past and those things that the new Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology would be doing in the future.

The report of the committee entitled "They Served—We Care" has been taken seriously by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and many of our recommendations have been carried out. However, there remain some recommendations that require further consideration.

Sometimes I believe that the group of Canadian servicemen who were in Nevada at the time of the nuclear explosions in the 1950s, and were also at Chalk River, have not been recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs as having been exposed to danger from nuclear radiation to the detri-

ment of their health. Many of those servicemen today are suffering from cancer.

The Veterans Department in the United States has now recognized that servicemen who served in Nevada at the time of the atomic explosions were exposed to danger in a nuclear zone; and the Canadian Department of Veterans Affairs should now give serious consideration to those servicemen who were present in Nevada and at Chalk River.

In 1982 the Minister of Veterans Affairs established a committee headed by Mr. A. D. McCracken for the purpose of endeavouring to shorten the time taken between an application for a disability pension and the time that a decision is reached. The McCracken report was made available to our committee and many of its recommendations have been implemented. Certainly the time has now been shortened, but I do not believe that it has been shortened enough. There is still too long a period between the time that a veteran makes his application and the time that he receives the decision as to whether or not he will receive a pension.

I also believe that many of our veterans should receive the benefit of the doubt. I cannot understand why the applications of many veterans are turned down by the Pension Commission but are passed later by the Appeal Board. Approximately 25 per cent of applications that are turned down by the Pension Commission are passed by the Appeal Board. Of the other 75 per cent of applications that go before the Pension Review Board, 25 per cent are passed. If those servicemen had been given the benefit of the doubt in the first place, they would not have had to wait two or three years before eventually having their applications accepted.

It is possible that the Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology can examine this matter to see if the process can be speeded up on behalf of veterans.

I believe also that many former prisoners of war who served at Dieppe and who were prisoners for two years or longer are not receiving a fair shake by the Department of Veterans Affairs. I know that prisoners of war in Japan and Hong Kong were treated badly, but nevertheless they are receiving a better deal than some of our ex-servicemen who were prisoners of war in Europe. I believe the time has come when the department should give further consideration to those veterans, to see if something can be done to assist them in the latter years of their lives.

Plans were made in recent years to set up a computer in Charlottetown, but because of the restraint program it had to be cancelled. Even if it were necessary to cancel that project, there should be some way for the records of veterans to be put into a computer, so that it does not take months for someone's records to be obtained. They must be available somewhere, and why cannot the few records that are left be placed in a computer? They would then be instantaneously available in Ottawa, Charlottetown, Halifax, or wherever the veteran might be living.

[Senator Riel.]