

died. I refer to the sense of frustration in particular of people who have become aware, as most Canadian families which include a veteran are now aware, that we are literally on the eve of a significant overhaul of our veterans legislation. Constituents have come to me recently to express a keen sense of frustration and even bitterness about a veteran, a member of the family, who has died before this progressive step has been completed.

● (5:50 p.m.)

I assume that the reason for placing this subject before the House today is that we are so close to November 11. Approximately one year ago, on November 7, 1969, the member for York North (Mr. Danson) introduced Bill C-146, to amend the Remembrance Day Act. The gist of the bill was that the Sunday prior to November 11 would be a national day of remembrance or memorial. As the hon. member stated at that time, the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month is at present, ignored by large segments of our society and misunderstood by equally large segments.

There are two choices in this matter. One alternative is to hold the line and, in spite of the worst fears of many of us, witness the continued erosion of this very significant day of remembrance in the history of Canada and, indeed, in the history of the world. The alternative is to reorganize and restructure. I am not sure of this quotation, but I think it was Cicero who said, "He who is ignorant of what happened before he was born is destined to remain a child for ever." This quotation came to mind this afternoon when I listened to the hon. member for York-Sunbury tell the House of the incident where a group of Dutch youths tore down a wreath which had been placed on a memorial by a number of Canadian veterans. I suppose for some there is a thin line between being a warmaker or a warmonger and, on the other hand, holding in reverence the casualties of war.

The purpose of the Woods committee was to analyse the situation in which veterans now find themselves so that our society might better, and in very practical ways demonstrate our corporate reverence for those who paid the price and suffered the pain of war without idolizing or praising that which must be diligently avoided. We must aid war victims, not nurture reverence for war. I suggest that we should do something—I do not pretend to have a brilliant insight into this matter—along the lines suggested by the hon. member for York North, that is, something to help our young people better appreciate the significance of Remembrance Day. We might thereby create a better mood in respect of this whole subject.

An hon. member mentioned there had been rumours that during the parades for Remembrance Day ceremonies this year some people were planning demonstrations on the assumption that those who parade on November 11 are swordrattlers, warmongers and hawks, and if you are not that kind of person you should oppose them. This is a dastardly misreading and misunderstanding of the facts. Because of this situation I again looked at the bill of the hon. member for York North. I know he was vilified by many people in our country, even by some

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loyal veterans. But perhaps we could do something so that Canadians would seriously and positively appreciate what we try to do on November 11. If one had to help war victims, without idolizing war, in the days of sword and spear, it became all the more essential in the days of bullets and bombs and a must in our day of mushrooms and missiles.

Every member of this House must, as I do, receive letters and delegations on behalf of veterans whose situations are tragic. As the hon. member for Victoria (Mr. Groos) pointed out, all veterans do not automatically receive a pension. I am continually amazed at the number of Canadians who somehow assume that by virtue of being a veteran one receives a pension. People write to their Member of Parliament and ask why a certain veteran is not receiving a pension. It is obviously a widely held belief that all veterans automatically receive pensions, but as the hon. member for Victoria correctly stated, this is not true.

Obviously, for a few veterans a present situation in which they find themselves, unfortunate as it may be, cannot be linked in any direct way to war service. We are all aware of this and I need not belabor the point. However, for some there is a linkage. Therefore, time is of the essence as far as the implementation of this massive updating of our veterans legislation is concerned. When veterans die while such sweeping improvements are just around the corner, there is naturally a sense of frustration, sometimes bitter, not only by the next of kin but by all sensitive members of the House and indeed all Canadians who champion this cause.

I firmly recognize and appreciate the fact that war veterans legislation is being given proper priority by the government of Canada, especially by our distinguished Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé). I wish to read two paragraphs from the white paper on veterans pensions.

Since World War I, Canada's legislative programs for the rehabilitation and welfare of her ex-servicemen and their dependants have been recognized, internationally as well as nationally, as being broad in their scope and generous in their provisions. And this legislation has been kept flexible and dynamic; it has been amended regularly to meet the changing needs of those it serves, and to adjust it to changes in the concepts of social justice and in the Canadian economy.

Through the Pension Act, Canada endeavours to compensate as fairly as possible for the economic disadvantages caused by disability or bereavement which is related to military service. To place an accurate monetary value on human suffering and sorrow would be virtually impossible, because of the many imponderable and subjective factors involved.

May I call it six o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member wishes to call it six o'clock. He has only two minutes left in which to speak. If hon. members agree, it might be better to allow him to finish his speech.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. McBride: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to emphasize the conclusions of the white paper. I concur in