

Veterans Affairs Committee Report

all matters that I ask the minister to look into before the Woods report is implemented, which I understand may be a year away.

In the Simcoe area the service officer of the Legion expressed concern at the phasing-out of Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto where many veterans in this area had been sent. He is concerned lest the load now placed on Westminster Hospital in the London area will overtax the facilities at that hospital and our veterans will find themselves without hospital services. I trust that the department is keeping abreast of the problem and is estimating the admissions that will be required during the next few years, so that Sunnybrook hospital is not phased out too early. These are some of the matters of vital concern which go to the grass roots of the problems of our veterans.

Before I conclude I would ask the Minister of Veterans Affairs to use his good offices to speak to the Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans), a tough man to deal with as we all know, about the new postal rates, the effect of which is placing an undue burden upon the *Legion*, formerly called the *Legionary*, the magazine of the Royal Canadian Legion. Not only have the postal rates been increased but the magazine has been excluded from the preferred rate given to newspapers and magazines. As a result the cost of mailing this national magazine to our veterans has increased by 1,400 per cent. Surely the Minister of Veterans Affairs can do something to see that the magazine is at least placed on the preferred list.

Having made these comments, I urge the Minister of Veterans Affairs to take into consideration some immediate plan of action to help our veterans until the recommendations of the Woods report are implemented.

Mr. Hubert Badanai (Fort William): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to preface my remarks in this debate with a brief account of my participation in the celebrations in France and Belgium marking the 50th anniversary of the 1918 armistice. The government of Canada provided 100 first world war veterans with transportation and all the facilities for what proved in reality to be a great pilgrimage superbly organized by the minister and officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The pilgrimage was to pay our tribute to the comrades left behind forever on foreign soil.

Canada has in France and Belgium 13 battlefield memorials commemorating the exploits of Canadian and Newfoundland troops. We

visited every one of them, and at each one a memorial service was held and wreaths laid by representatives of each unit that made up the Canadian expeditionary force; and on each occasion a wreath presented on behalf of the government of Canada preceded the wreath-laying ceremony.

During almost two weeks of ceremonies and receptions I was astonished at the military precision of event following event, a prodigious triumph of organization on the part of the Department of Veterans Affairs, led by the then deputy minister of veterans affairs Ernest Coté, himself a veteran of the second world war. His organizing ability, ably assisted by other officials of the department, made the entire trip a pleasure for everyone participating in one of the most colourful, brilliant conceptions of commemorative ceremonies that I have ever seen. It was one of the greatest patriotic demonstrations Canada ever staged on foreign soil, most of the credit for which should properly go to the untiring efforts and hard work of the officials of the department.

● (2:50 p.m.)

I think I am expressing the views of my colleagues on this side of the house when I say that this debate is worth while and welcome because it reflects the interest of members of all parties in the human side of the subject. In all the years I have been a member of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs I have never encountered partisanship when the needs and aspirations of our war veterans have been dealt with. The mover of the motion under consideration is to be congratulated for his report on the 25th anniversary of the cessation of hostilities in the European theatre of war. All the same I disagree most emphatically with his suggestion that the government is dictatorial and not doing its utmost on behalf of veterans. I regret the irresponsible statements the hon. member made. They were adequately and effectively answered by the Minister of Veterans Affairs. I congratulate the minister on his very fine presentation.

The minister has pointed out on several occasions that it is the government's duty to consider the problems affecting the one million veterans of Canada. Happily, not all of them require assistance, nor do all especially need to appeal to the government. However, of the one million veterans, 14 per cent are pensioned, about 8 per cent are in need of veterans allowances and about 1 per cent are