

Veterans Affairs

To assume and pay out of the War Appropriation or out of moneys provided for the purpose by Parliament any gratuity annuity, pension or other pecuniary obligation, arising out of any award which has been or may hereafter be made by His Majesty the King in respect of gallantry during the present war to any member of the Armed Forces of Canada.

Under the Gallantry Gratuities and Annuities Order, the CPC pays an annuity to those who have received one of the gallantry awards if he or she is awarded a disability pension, War Veterans Allowance or an annuity under the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act. This applies only to those who earned awards since the beginning of World War II. As for annuities still being paid to veterans of World War I, we do not know exactly how many there are at this time or how much they receive. I understand that the Canadian Government has made inquiries of the British Government as a first step in eliminating the discrepancies between the different groups of gallantry award recipients, but has not yet received the requested information. When it is received, I am confident that the Minister will move with haste to bring about the necessary changes to eliminate the present inequities. Even though it has been the responsibility of the British Government to pay monetary benefits to members of either the Canadian or British Forces who fought in World War I, I understand that Government has no interest in changing the amount it pays to those veterans. In order to ensure that veterans of both wars are treated equally, the Canadian Government will be required to accept responsibility.

As I stated earlier, we will support this motion. There is no reason that veterans from the two World Wars should be treated differently. I understand the Canadian Government has made inquiries and taken the first steps necessary to bring the two groups up to the same level. I trust it will also provide for the inclusion of DSO recipients among those qualifying for annuities. I cannot believe that the issue of deficits or controlling Government expenditures could be significant when one considers the heroic contributions of the people involved on the one hand, and the trivial amounts involved on the other.

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak very briefly in support of the motion of the Hon. Member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon). It is a particular pleasure to have the opportunity to speak in favour of a motion put forward by that Hon. Member because, while I have known of his reputation for many years, I actually had the opportunity of looking at his picture on a daily basis for a good many years in the office of my former law partner, Sydney Frost, who had served with the Hon. Member for Victoria as a Company Commander with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in the Netherlands during World War II. I can still remember that picture on Syd Frost's filing cabinet showing all the Company Commanders gathered in front of a tent in a muddy field in Holland in 1945. Therefore, I am really pleased to have an opportunity to speak in support of a motion put by him today.

It is astounding to me that the veterans of World War I would not be receiving the same sort of recognition, as far as gallantry awards are concerned, as the veterans of World War II. The only reason I can attribute this to, it seems to me, must

be the fact of the slow but steady growth of Canada to that of a complete and sovereign nation. You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that the collection of Canadian colonies came together in 1867 to form Canada, and that was some 47 years before the beginning of World War I. There had been slow but steady progress in that period of time toward full sovereignty for Canada, but of course we had not achieved that exalted status in spite of the fact that at the beginning of this century we had sent a contingent of our Armed Forces to serve in the Boer War. Many people believed that World War I was really the beginning of the true Canadian nationality.

You will recall, of course, that there was the Canadian Corps where the Canadian Forces served together, albeit as part of the British Expeditionary Force in Europe. However, they were a separate fighting unit. Of course, many people consider that the Battle of Vimy Ridge itself marked the creation of the true Canadian nationality. That of course was the premier exercise of the Canadian Corps in World War I, although there were many, many outstanding battles in which the Canadian Corps received recognition.

It is interesting to think back to those times and remember that the Prime Minister of the day, Sir Robert Borden, insisted that the Canadian Corps fight together as one separate unit, and that Canada have its place in the Imperial War Cabinet separate and apart, not just as part of a war effort involving Canadian forces being directed by the British Government alone. He also insisted, of course, on a separate place at the peace table for Canada. Flowing from that a few years later, the Statute of Westminster was passed by the British Parliament which gave Canada full control over its foreign affairs as well as the control over its domestic affairs which it achieved in 1867.

The time is long since past when we should be recognizing our Canadian heroes of World War I. They are a symbol of Canadian sovereignty and I am very pleased to be able to support the motion of the Hon. Member for Victoria. I am sure that the Hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Hees) is going to stand now and tell us that the Government accepts this responsibility as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Before he does I have to recognize the Hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. Clinch) and the Hon. Member for Okanagan-Similkameen (Mr. King).

Mr. Roger Clinch (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, one might think it strange that a relatively young new Member in the House would want to say a few words on this Bill, but I feel compelled to rise in support of the motion put forward by my colleague from Victoria (Mr. McKinnon). There are many reasons for doing so, not the least of which is the fact that as a former member of the executive of the local Legion, I found that the support of this Government and this Ministry has been excellent since the new Minister took office.