

*Army Benevolent Fund Act and Related Acts*

Those are the words of a young farmer from Manitoba. He came from a rural community which relied on wood heating, where people had to work outside all year round. Cold was not abnormal. However, the impact on him of this incarceration was very, very severe. Finally, Christmas, 1944:

Christmas, 1944

—another Xmas gone by in this hole. I sure hope it will be the last.

The Minister indicated that there is a need for simple justice for these men. They not only fought on behalf of this country in the pursuit of freedom, they also spent time in the prison camps of the countries we were at war with. Let us look at the compensation for those who were captured at Dieppe and spent 33 months in a POW camp. Those who spent less than three months in confinement—perhaps they were captured towards the end of the war or were released early for some reason—now receive half as much as those who spent the full 33 months in confinement. The Minister is increasing that percentage to 25 and I thank him for that. However, I suggest it is not sufficient. It does not come anywhere near what Solomon and his computer would come up with.

We are not talking about a lot of money in comparison to our budget, but we are certainly talking about a significant amount for those who receive an increase. The 5 per cent increase for Dieppe POWs will cost the taxpayer \$1.3 million a year. That is on top of the \$5.2 million currently being spent. If we went to 30 per cent, all we would need to extract from Government coffers would be another \$1.3 million. Going to 35 per cent would mean another \$1.3 million. Going to 40 per cent would mean another \$1.3 million. The total cost to the Treasury of meeting the request of the Dieppe Veterans and Prisoners Of War Association (Canada) for 40 per cent would be \$10.4 million a year. I want to make it clear that I acknowledge the fact that the Minister has been working very hard to increase this amount. Whether it is 30 per cent, 35 per cent or 40 per cent, I know in heart he would like to see it increased. We all would.

So I suggest to Hon. Members, particularly the Minister's cabinet colleagues, that we should take another look at this issue. By all means let us pass this Bill. It is important that we get it through. We in this Party are prepared to expedite matters so as to have all three readings this afternoon, and send the Bill to the Senate for approval and implementation. However, let us remind the cabinet colleagues of the Minister of Veterans Affairs that it is important that we provide simple justice to those 1,550 men or their dependants. We can never repay them for the services they provided, but we can ensure that they have the money they need to live a full and happy life. We would simply be repaying in a small way our debt to them. I say to the Government: Open up those purse-strings a little bit. Let us see a Bill this spring or perhaps this fall which increases the support we provide these veterans.

I want to conclude this part with one more reading from the diary. This is the day before my father's release:

Wed. May 2.45

The end is in sight. Jerry troops have been pouring past here all day retreating from the front. At present the British and Canadian troops are 8 or 10 km away

and are just following up the retreating troops. The Jerries are just as glad as we are and are just waiting for a chance to give themselves up. We are at a kind of standstill at present and will have lookouts posted all night to give us warning that they are coming so we can get into the bush out of its way.

Those were the final words my father wrote during a very long period of incarceration. He eventually passed away at the very young age of 52 because of the deterioration of his body resulting from his incarceration for those 33 months. One of the ironies of my entry in this House was that it was 25 years to the day of the Throne Speech in 1984 that my father had passed away.

Dealing with other aspects of the legislation, I want to compliment the Minister on the changes he makes. Some of them, as he says, are not expensive but they do make sense. They clean up some of the bureaucracy. May I say that that is the kind of regulatory reform we on this side of the House welcome. We are not dogmatic when it comes to regulations; they have to make sense, they have to work.

I also compliment him on increasing the amount for the DVA scholarship. As I mentioned earlier, I spent a couple of years in university with the DVA scholarship. I could not have done it otherwise; my mother did not have sufficient income to put me into university. She certainly could not have helped my brother who went on for a number of years to gain two Masters degrees. He would not have been in a position to that, and I know that there are sons and daughters of veterans out there who are in the same situation. We have a responsibility to ensure that they have access to education. It seems to me that that \$800 figure was around when I was going to university, and so clearly past administrations have not done their jobs in moving that up.

● (1640)

I would like to say as well that I am very pleased with the changes in the areas that affect the Hong Kong vets. Very clearly the move the Government is making is very good and we support that.

Let me close by thanking the Minister once again for bringing forward these improvements. I know he will take the battle back to Cabinet to try to squeeze a few extra pennies out of those misers that he sits with.

**Ms. Sheila Coppins (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, I too would like to rise and congratulate the Minister on his initiative. We gained firsthand knowledge of the kind of poignant stories about many of our prisoners of war. The Minister who brought forward this initiative has displayed a great deal of sensitivity in this area. He has, in fact, shown leadership in that he has been prepared to move on amendments which will in many respects improve the lot faced by our war veterans, and in particular prisoners of war at Dieppe and Korea.

I have a couple of questions with respect to specific amendments. I am sure that the Minister may be able to respond to them. One is with respect to Clause 14, paragraphs 6.1(a)(i) and (b), which deal with the issue of what is considered to be income. I understand the reason for the introduction of these amendments was to clarify the consideration of income for the