

Veterans Affairs Committee Report

welcomed them with open arms. Not to mention the people themselves who wanted to show their gratitude in a hundred ways.

From Carentan, a chain of torches were lighted along the coast. Remembrance torches, freedom torches. And in the evening, at Sainte-Mère-Eglise, took place a re-enactment, according to the sound and light technique, of the landing of 1944, with the sound of bombers, Nazi boots, machine-guns and church-bells ringing in token of rejoicing. Even dummy paratroopers were dropped from the sky. And the loud-speakers installed in the public squares repeated the old coded messages from the B.B.C. in London announcing the invasion.

On the same day, that is Friday, June 6, a ceremony was held at the Beny-sur-Mer military cemetery under the auspices of our own Department of Veterans Affairs. This cemetery could be mistaken for a British one because most inscriptions, if not all, are in English only. All commands to the troops were given in English during the ceremony: guard of honour, salute, last post, reveille, prayers, flower-offering, Scottish lament, benediction. The Canadian ambassador in Paris, His Excellency Paul Beaulieu, saved our honour by reciting a few verses from Charles Péguy.

There are problems. And do not tell me that the department does not have enough money to pay tribute to our veterans. Some of them had a French name, and if it was "Lambert", you can see it on their tombstone spelled "Lambpert". Even in death they have to put up with this lack of respect. I wonder what is the place given to Quebecers. I am not surprised at all the troubles facing Canada today, for justice is not done to our people.

I shall go on with the quotation:

Veteran soldiers of the Régiment de la Chaudière asked that one of their own be allowed during the ceremony to lay a wreath on behalf of Quebec. That would have been a veteran who took part in the landing in June, 1944. The suggestion was met with a flat refusal by the delegates of the federal Department of Canadian Veterans Affairs.

He was finally allowed to lay the wreath once the ceremonies had ended; such arrogance was even more disgusting in view of the fact that that Quebec veteran was Mr. Hugues Lapointe and that in Quebec he represents the Queen as Lieutenant Governor.

When in order to pay tribute to our veterans, we are forced to put up with such humiliations, as a representative of the province of Quebec I do not have the right to accept a re-occurrence of such a situation. It will have to be corrected so that in the future on the Normandie beaches the tribute be paid in our language, with our prayers in the way we intend to live.

I continue with the question:

The delegates from the Régiment de la Chaudière, shocked by such a public blunder, organized for the next day a ceremony at the very site of

the landing, on the shore. It was a small and intimate ceremony, without protocol display, in the presence of the villagers.

Our Canadians who have fought so hard, who have helped preserve our freedom, are driven to organize a small gathering in a small village in order to pay such a high tribute. Our brave soldiers did deserve, I think, a much greater tribute.

And I will close by mentioning another rather unfortunate incident. The federal Department of Veterans Affairs had organized a press conference on the evening of June 5, at the City Hall in Caen. Here are the facts as related:

The whole thing took place in English only. A briefing about the ceremony which was to take place the next day at the military cemetery of Beny-sur-Mer was held. A public relations official went as far as to suggest that the Canadian veterans should not be allowed to take pictures during the ceremony, for proprieties sake, he claimed.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to drag this on interminably, but I believe that by quoting this newspaper article, you will understand, as I do, that such glaring injustices certainly generate disunity in Canada, and I would not like to be always compelled to remind people that justice must prevail. I hope that the department will take the necessary steps to insure that this kind of situation does not happen again elsewhere.

Hon. Jean-Eudes Dubé (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I intend, in the few minutes that are left to me, to try and answer all the arguments that have been presented at this stage of the debate. I first want to answer the arguments of the hon. member for Frontenac (Mr. Dumont).

He told us that he fully endorsed all that had been said by the two members who spoke before him.

But the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) who spoke first was himself at Beny-sur-Mer. He complained that the English language was neglected during the ceremony, while the hon. member for Frontenac complains that everything was in English.

Mr. Dumont: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I clearly said that I agreed as to all the economic problems, but I pointed out other problems.

Mr. Dubé: Mr. Speaker, the first hon. member who spoke congratulated us, and with due reason, as to the reconstitution of the