

Canadian Flag

Mr. Winkler: May I ask the hon. member a question? Is he referring to Mr. Christopher Young?

Mr. Weichel: I do not know who the fellow is, but whoever he is I am letting him know what I think of him. This is the picture. I would say it is a terrible insult to every legionnaire, as well as to our Prime Minister. May I ask you, Mr. Speaker, does this contribute to unity in Canada, a picture like this? I should say not.

The Royal Canadian Legion, with its thousands of members, surely has the same right as any Canadian citizen to express an opinion in our democratic way of life. Yes, in case some people forget, let me remind them that these men and women, along with their comrades who paid the supreme sacrifice, carried the banner when our fine country was in need of their services. Let us not forget that, I as a disabled member, along with all members, can truthfully say that this organization has never played politics—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—

[*Text*]

Mr. Weichel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to go ahead with my speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Villeneuve is rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, last night two Conservative members, namely the hon. member for Three Rivers (Mr. Balcer) and the hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm (Mr. Pigeon), claimed that I was reading my speech whereas I was just consulting my notes.

I do not want to be mean but I notice that the hon. member who has the floor at present is reading his speech.

There is a provision in our standing orders which forbids the reading of a speech in the house and it is on that basis, not because the hon. member is a Conservative, that I insist that he speak without reading his text.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. A similar point of order was made yesterday evening and, if I remember well, I pointed out to the hon. member who raised it that no provision of our standing orders forbids the reading of a speech in the house.

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[*Text*]

Mr. Weichel: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any argument there at all. The Prime Minister and many others here have done this too. If I were 20 years younger I would try to do it without reading.

Mr. Herridge: Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.

Mr. Weichel: I might mention again that I, as a disabled member, along with all members can truthfully say that this organization has never played politics and has given no one the impression that it was trying to tell the government what it should do. Their big job has always been to work for the benefit of all the veterans, especially the disabled. Such efforts have been highly recognized by all broadminded Canadians, and I am sure the Legion does not want a pat on the back for doing what it is doing here. Its members, along with other veterans organizations, have done much in keeping Canada's security and unity at a high level.

To those who criticize this great organization in respect of the flag issue, may I bring to their attention the numerous community and international activities engaged in by the Royal Canadian Legion. We can think of the Netherlands pilgrimages, Legion sports for young and old and the conference of British commonwealth ex-service leagues. This group is continually working for the peace of the world, while we are sitting here trying to do our little bit too. It has been working for an increase in pensions for the amputees, the blind and the paraplegics, as well as for thousands of others. It has engaged in service bureau work and runs its poppy campaign, which is perhaps one of the greatest and outstanding efforts of these men in assisting veterans in need. If the government had to take over this work it would cost millions of dollars each year.

Then there is its community service, which should be recognized by all people in certain communities. It has programs ranging from physical fitness for our young people to low rental housing for the old. The Legion and its numerous branches across Canada has been establishing training camps and the success of these ventures, with competent coaches such as Mr. Dyson, has been outstanding. Then we have the junior Olympics, leadership, training, bursaries and—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt my hon. friend but I am sure he will recognize at this point that he is straying