

I therefore totally agree with the brief on veterans submitted by the Canadian Legion, and I am sure the Minister will give special attention to the entirely justified demands being made for those who served so well. I do not think there is any reward in this world that could possibly be considered adequate compensation for these people who fought in the first of three wars, and I do not think anything we could give them would ever be commensurate with their efforts to fight for freedom.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to read a letter I received, and I suppose the Hon. Member for Victoria has received a number of letters like it. It is a letter from a veteran who wrote to me, not without humour, in May 1985, on the subject raised by the Hon. Member for Victoria in his motion. I quote:

[English]

The Acting High Commissioner, Sir George Perley drew up with the War Office an agreement that was finally approved on January 24, 1915.

That is not yesterday, Mr. Speaker.

It specified that Canada provide the pay, allowances and pensions of her troops and defray the cost of transporting them and material to the United Kingdom. In addition to paying the actual cost of all supplies and stores issued in Great Britain. There is one interesting addition to this agreement. It states that Canada shall pay the sum of six shillings per shell, per man, of all shells fired by Canadian artillery with the exception of seige artillery shells.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I have no idea who dreamed up such a thing, but if we could find out how many shells were fired during World War I, perhaps we would know how much all that cost Great Britain, if the agreement was in force.

In any event, I continue reading the letter of my British Columbia friend who states:

[English]

My contention is that the Conservative Party under Sir Robert Borden made these agreements so they should straighten it out.

[Translation]

He was referring to this Government, of course. So I am sure that—

[English]

I contacted the Legion Magazine asking that any former members of the CEF—

The expeditionary force.

—who had won gallantry awards for World War I and had not received such gratuity get in touch with me.

I have been flooded with letters from both winners of awards and next of kin and all say that they have never received any such gratuity and in most cases were not aware that such gratuities were in force.

Personally I have no particular bone to pick on this issue as the only award I ever received was the Croix de Guerre. (Came up with the rations).

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, all that to say that most veterans did not know that gratuities were offered those who had sacrificed themselves and accomplished acts of bravery during World War I.

I fully agree—and I am sure the Minister will look into this matter—that the policy ought to be reviewed so that the

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Canadian Government might offer gratuities to those Canadians who have served with honour. Needless to say, that would include the group which has always been forgotten, the group of veterans who were recipients of the Distinguished Service Order.

That, Mr. Speaker, is the humble contribution I wanted to make. I rest assured that our representations will be given every consideration by the Minister of Veterans Affairs who has always paid close attention to the claims of the Canadian Legion and of Hon. Members who have shown great interest in veterans affairs so as to improve the situation of those to whom we owe so much.

[English]

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor-Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in support of the Private Members' Bill which has been introduced by the Hon. Member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon) which deals with the annuities paid to veterans of the First and Second World War who received gallantry awards such as the Victoria Cross, the Military Cross, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Distinguished Conduct Medal, the Military Medal, the conspicuous Gallantry Medal and others. The Bill proposes also that recipients of the Distinguished Service Order also receive similar annuities.

Recently I had the honour of being one of those who were members of the veterans and parliamentary delegation who went to Europe to commemorate the heroic contribution of Canadians in the last World War. Our delegation was headed by the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Hees) and included the Hon. Member for Victoria as well. The trip contributed significantly to my understanding and pride in the contribution of Canadians who fought to preserve freedom in Europe.

● (1730)

We owe a great debt to those who served during both wars. Many did not come back, and many of those who did suffered wounds and made great personal sacrifices. This motion deals with the way we honour some of those people, those who received awards for gallantry in the service of their country and the defence of freedom.

At present the veterans of the two World Wars receive annuities of different amounts and from different Governments. This discrepancy was brought to the Canadian Government's attention by a resolution of the Royal Canadian Legion last year which pointed out that an additional pension is paid to veterans of World War II by the Canadian Government when they are recipients of various medals and awards. Veterans of World War I are not eligible for this payment. Until 1943 it was the British Government's responsibility to pay a gratuity and annuities to the recipients of gallantry awards. In June of that year the Canadian Cabinet agreed to take over the payment of annuities to all future recipients, as well as for those who had received awards up to that point in World War II. The Canadian Pension Commission was authorized: