

Routine Proceedings

This summer, as Canadian forces moved toward the gulf, it was something like a rerun from 40 years ago when Canadians volunteered to go to Korea in support of the United Nations.

Later this month, members of this House will be in Asia in the company of our Hong Kong veterans, the first of our troops to see action and the last to see freedom.

The anniversary of these campaigns tell us that the reputation won for Canada in the mud of France and Flanders in the First War was well and truly maintained.

On Sunday, we will be saluting all those who risked their lives for strangers in other lands. In particular, we will be thinking of the more than 110,000 Canadians who did not return home to their loved homes.

Let us also remember the many others who did not serve in uniform but whose lives were changed vastly by what happened in some far away land. I am thinking of the spouses, the parents, the sisters, the brothers and the relatives—in fact all those who took part in the war effort—who looked after those who came home disabled in body or mind. Their service has been unending; their love is timeless and unbroken. Through the Veterans Independence Program and other initiatives we have been able to make life easier for veterans and those who cared for them.

As we stand in silence on Remembrance Day and reflect on the sacrifices that war brought throughout our history, let us in 1990 ponder the words written by Lord Byng after the battle at Vimy Ridge in 1917, when he said:

There they stood on Vimy Ridge that 9th day of April, 1917, men from Quebec stood shoulder to shoulder with men from Ontario, men from the Maritimes with men from British Columbia, and there was forged a nation tempered by the fires of sacrifice and hammered on the anvil of high adventure.

Those are powerful words, marking the point in time when Canadians came of age and became a full partner in the family of nations dedicated to promoting and preserving democracy and world peace, and we have not looked back since.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

As Canadians, we have so much to remember and so much to be thankful for.

[*English*]

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, as the Official Opposition critic for veterans affairs, it is an honour for me to rise today and pay tribute to those Canadians who fought for their country and for freedom. We honour today not only those who died in two world wars and Korea, but those who continue to deal today with the aftermath of their struggle.

When Canadians think of what Remembrance Day means in their daily lives, they think of the poppy. In the weeks preceding November 11, they see the Royal Canadian Legion's familiar poppy boxes in stores and church halls. In return for a donation of spare change, they get a small flower, modest in spite of its blood red colour which they pin on their lapel. This has become such a common rite of late fall that perhaps people do not think of the significance of their actions.

Canadians wear the poppy as a symbol of respect and honour for those who fought for our country. I do not think that there is anyone who, if asked if they remember our war dead, would deny that they do. I do fear, however, that not enough Canadians would do so without a reminder, even with their blood red flower on their coats. I regret that not enough people think of our ongoing responsibilities to war veterans.

On Remembrance Day, all across the country, people take time from work and from school to gather around war memorials, to lay wreaths and to bow their heads for a moment of silence at 11 a.m. We try at that time to visualize the 114,000 Canadians who gave their lives so that we can live in freedom. Moment of silence is a small gesture of respect to those men and women. But after we raise our heads, after we return to work and to school, our responsibility does not end. We have not done enough no matter how sincere our tribute.

We have an ongoing responsibility to today's war veterans, spouses and widows and dependants, those who were willing to make the same ultimate sacrifice for freedom and who live among us today. These aging Canadians face special problems. The war did not end for these people in 1918, 1945 or 1953. It is manifest in their daily lives by disabling physical conditions and by the personal conflict and grief felt by all who experienced war.