

Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans

associations from every continent and has a total membership running into the millions. Among the principal aims of the federation are the establishment of permanent relations between associations of veterans, aid to veterans through the exchange of information on legislation and rehabilitation, and promotion of international peace and security through support of the United Nations Charter.

Working individually, through the National Council of Veterans' Organizations and on an international level, The Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans Association deserves much credit. Without a doubt, work will be continued after the passage of Bill S-25. The government has been making slow but steady progress in dealing with the special needs of veterans. There is always work left to accomplish and new ideas to consider. The Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans Association can and does contribute substantially to this process. Passage of this bill will guarantee that this constructive input both to community and veteran needs will continue.

This bill is simple in terms of legislative complexity, but it signifies a great deal to the army, navy and air force veterans. Their future depends on the passage of this bill. All Canadians will benefit from the continuation of this organization's fine work.

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to say a few words on behalf of the members of the New Democratic Party caucus on this bill.

As the House knows, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), who is in the House today and who wanted to be here because he knew this bill was being brought forward, has been a formidable fighter on behalf of veterans over the years to improve not only pension benefits for veterans, but to improve the lot of those individuals who fought so hard on behalf of Canadians and their families.

Veterans are a constant reminder to all Canadians of what true patriotism is all about and, in fact, what the meaning of Canada is. It gives me the greatest of pleasure to give unanimous consent on behalf of my caucus to this piece of legislation.

Mr. Roland de Corneille (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the explanation given by the hon. member for Winnipeg-Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie). I would point out that Senator Marshall, in his eloquent presentation, called for the passage of Bill S-25, respecting The Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada.

The Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Campbell), on behalf of the government, is enthusiastically supportive of Bill S-25, respecting The Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada. I assure hon. members he would very much have liked to be present to express his personal support for this bill, but because of various motions, questions of privilege and so on, he unfortunately had to dash away to catch a plane. However, as his parliamentary secretary it is my pleasure to speak on his behalf and to try as best I can to express his support for this bill and his views on it.

• (1250)

I think the purpose of this bill is, above all, to broaden the conditions of eligibility for membership in this association, which makes it possible for people to join and support the purposes and objectives of this organization for generations to come.

This bill is more important than just another bill which brings about a change of name or extends membership. In reality, it is a bill which would assist us to hallow and enshrine the sacrifices of those who fought, as well as those who died, in wars throughout Canada's history. By passing this bill we are ensuring that membership in this association will be open to those who will carry on the name, the work and goals of this association as well as its memories, and also make us sensitive to our past and our future.

We know that we must do many things to ensure monetary respect, recognition, reparation and protection for our veterans. This is done through various efforts to ensure that pensions are provided and to ensure that there are war allowances.

We also know that the minister and the government have sought to test a new program entitled the aging veterans program. This new program is designed to take still one step further to promote awareness of the important fact that we have duties to aging veterans. We must make sure they are given the considerations and comforts necessary to allow them to remain in their homes so that they will not have to be institutionalized.

I am sure this kind of program and any other program we could undertake would be valuable. There are things we can do with money, but much more important than merely providing money is that we remember. That is why this bill is so important. It is a recognition that we remember those who fought as well as those who died. By widening the terms of eligibility for membership in this organization, The Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada, we are making sure others may join the organization and that others will help make sure we remember. When a society no longer remembers, it is a society which is beginning to die. It is a beautiful thought to know that we can be part of this today and vote for this bill so that we can recognize and remember the work of our veterans, both those who have died and those who are with us today. That, as well as recognition for their families, is ensured by making certain this organization can continue and that its purposes are widened.

There is a phrase "Lest we forget". By passing this bill we will take one more step in making sure we will not forget; and on behalf of my colleagues in the government and in the Liberal Party, it is my pleasure to support the passage of this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The Chair is aware that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) might like to make a few brief remarks. Is there unanimous consent for him to do so?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.