

Veterans Insurance

[English]

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Madam Chairman, I rise on a question of personal privilege. The hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe, in the interests of seeing this bill passed speedily, suggested that I should not speak on it. I have not spoken; yet here is the hon. member for Edmonton West speaking on the bill for the last 15 minutes and delaying passage. I have forgone the opportunity to speak, and I think members of the opposition should also be willing to make short speeches. It would assist matters greatly if the hon. member for Edmonton West would consider this matter and allow this bill to pass immediately.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Madam Chairman, I told the hon. member personally that I do not approve of this type of legislation. Perhaps it will take a few knocks for this message to get through.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Madam Chairman, I rise on a question of personal privilege—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Order, please. It is not a question of privilege, but a point of debate. I shall now recognize the hon. member for Edmonton West.

[English]

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): If, under threats from the chief government whip, we must consider the bill—

An hon. Member: Say something.

Mr. Flynn: If you have anything to say, say it.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): I tell the hon. member from down in Ontario that I have something to say, and I will say it, on my feet.

Mr. Flynn: If you have something to say, say it.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): The hon. member spends a good deal of time sitting in his seat, opening his mouth and showing how wide is the cavity between his ears.

Mr. Flynn: We are still listening. Say something, if you have anything to say.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): The parliamentary secretary may say, "But these are modern day mores". Yes, they are among certain people. Surely to goodness, people of a contrary view have the right to express that. I am prepared to listen to the parliamentary secretary explain why certain social and moral values, as between marriage and the right of common wives or spouses, should be relaxed. I would be pleased to listen, to hear what kind of case she could make. I regret this legislation. I do not think it is right in the present day context, and lots of people support me in this view.

I am exercised that this bill has been brought forward in the present manner, that it has been before the committee on veterans affairs, been before the legislative committee of the cabinet, and that it appears on the order paper, when in fact the recommendations of the veterans affairs committee regarding prisoners of war were before the cabinet

[The Assistant Deputy Chairman.]

and the department last year and the year before. I have exhorted the Department of Veterans Affairs and various deputy ministers over the years, only to get the brush-off.

An hon. Member: You need it.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Who said, "You need it?" Somebody said the prisoners of war need the brush-off.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Who was that gutless individual on the other side?

An hon. Member: It was Munro.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): No. Munro is not here.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): I find it passing strange, and I speak on behalf of thousands of prisoners of war—I was one of them and I have declared my interest and position in this—I find it passing strange that the department and the cabinet should give greater priority to common-law wives than to the claims of prisoners of war and their entitlement. That is why I object to the bill.

Mrs. Campagnolo: Madam Chairman, will the hon. gentleman permit a question?

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): I trust it is pertinent to common-law wives of veterans, about whom I have been speaking.

Mrs. Campagnolo: My question is most relevant. The hon. gentleman referred tonight to mistresses, concubines, those who have been shackled up, and so on, ad infinitum. He has not observed the facts of life. Some veterans who came home from the war and became parents undoubtedly are the parents of young children around today. I have had personal dealings with women who are second wives or, if you will common law spouses. They have young children to raise, while the first, legitimate wife's children are over 30 years old. I feel that the question is relevant and a most important point for consideration.

An hon. Member: Put that in your pipe.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Madam Chairman, the hon. lady has had no more contact with those persons than I have. I assure her that there are more veterans and wives in the city of Edmonton than in her part of British Columbia. Working through the Legion, I can assure her I have seen all kinds of people.

May I say this: the woman in her fifties, who has raised her family and is tossed on the scrap heap of society by a husband who picks somebody else, is defenceless. You will find far fewer young women who have taken up with a World War II veteran. I am not talking of the man who has been discharged from the forces recently. After all, the man who was in World War II is probably over 50. It is not likely that he will have a young, common-law wife. There are not many who will have a young, common-law wife, and children.