

Veterans Affairs

annuities from the British treasury. Perhaps I could read a few words from the policy manual as it relates to gallantry awards:

In 1943 the Canadian Government assumed the responsibility for the payment involved insofar as members of the Canadian Forces were concerned, with respect to awards earned during World War II or later, but did so under the rules established by the British.

This may account for the amount of these awards which is meagre indeed. The policy manual goes on:

If the veteran is in receipt of a pension for disability under the Pension Act, or an allowance under the War Veterans Allowance Act, or an annual allowance under the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act, he is entitled to an annuity of \$50.00 from the commencement date of his pension or allowance or 24 August, 1972, whichever is the later date.

Later on, this was changed to read as follows:

—that it is deemed advisable for the Dominion of Canada, through the Canadian Pension Commission, to assume payment of all such grants arising out of awards which have been or may hereafter be made in respect of the war to members of the armed forces of Canada;—

Remember that this was dated 1943.

It is important to realize that these gratuities are only paid to Canadian gallantry award winners if they have applied to the British Government for them. I submit that many Canadians did not know to whom to apply in the British Government and some were disinclined to apply to another Government in any case. It is now time for our Government to recognize officially the brave members of our Armed Forces who fought in World War I by granting to them, directly from Canadian funds, the annuities and gratuities for which they were eligible if they applied to the British Government.

In connection with this and included in my motion is a request that recipients of the Distinguished Service Order also be entitled to an annuity or award. By way of background, it had been decided many years ago and at least as far back as World War I that winners of the DSO who were almost exclusively of the rank of Major or above were not soldiering for money and indeed that it would be an affront to offer them a gratuity for merely being brave. While the Victoria Cross, the George Cross and the Distinguished Service Cross are included in gratuities, the DSO has been excluded. I would like to see that changed as well. The exclusion of the DSO is a relic of a class distinction that has never really fitted the relatively classless Canadian society of the 20th century.

● (1710)

Since tabling this motion last March, there has been some progress, which leads me to believe that the Minister is giving serious consideration to accepting the motion. I do not need to tell the House that the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Hees) has made great strides in bringing to the veterans of the country the maximum benefits to which they are entitled. He has passed legislation to ensure that their pensions are realistic and he has initiated policy changes that give the advantage to the veterans in deciding controversial claims. I am confident that he will continue in this manner and that veterans will receive every consideration, as they so richly deserve.

I would like to speak on another matter, which has been brought to the Minister's attention by the Royal Canadian

Legion. Indeed, I have quite a large file on the matter. The matter concerns World War II volunteers who served in Canada only, but who served as volunteers for 365 days or more. Those veterans are not entitled to receive war veteran's allowance, as they did not serve in a theatre of war.

The Minister knows very well of the anomalies to which that policy has given rise, as a result of some "Canadian only" veterans who were deemed to have been in a theatre of war as a result of having crossed over from the mainland to Prince Edward Island. However, on Vancouver Island the rules are different. Vancouver Island was at one point shelled by an enemy submarine, yet it is not considered to have been in a theatre of war. Veterans who served on Vancouver Island do not qualify for the war veterans allowance. As far as I am concerned, any veteran who volunteered for active service but, through circumstances not of his or her own making, did not make it outside the western hemisphere, should be entitled to the full benefits which are accorded to other veterans.

I know the Government has a first priority to reduce the deficit and, therefore, I understand the reluctance to commit additional funds. In that respect, the Legion made the following suggestion in the brief which it presented to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. It read:

While the estimated cost is high, some of it would be offset by reduced expenses for the Canadian Pension Commission in the consideration of disability claims. With a change in legislation it would not then be necessary to seek rulings from the Commission to try to establish an entitlement to qualify for an assessment of 1 per cent or more. Furthermore, there is the provision in our resolution of having had to serve for a period in excess of 365 days in Canada as the basis of eligibility.

The veterans of Canada would no doubt appreciate a statement of principle from the Minister that "Canada only" volunteers who served in excess of 365 days are deserving of the war veterans allowance and that, when fiscal circumstances are more favourable, a plan of action to implement payment of the allowance to those veterans would be made known.

With respect to the motion, as I have stated, some progress has been made. The Chairman of the Canadian Pension Commission provided to the Minister a cost breakdown of the provision of gratuities and annuities to World War I veterans and to all recipients of the DSO. The Minister graciously provided me with a copy. After the start-up costs, which would provide for all one-time payments in 1985-86, subsequent years' costs for World War I recipients, who are currently paid by the British Government, would amount to less than \$5,000 in 1986-87 and would lessen each year thereafter. It should be clearly understood that nothing I am saying would limit the payments to those veterans who are currently being paid by the British Government. Many veterans preferred not to apply to the British Government for the gratuities, and many others, while eligible, were never aware of their eligibility.

The Chairman of the Canadian Pension Commission recommended that consideration be given to assuming the costs. The Chairman's brief noted:

The present situation appears to be a widespread source of dissatisfaction and has been the subject of several resolutions from veterans organizations. Failure