

MOTION:

Moved by George Peterson

Seconded by Harry Atkinson

that a donation of \$1000. from the F.E.P.O.W. fund be made to the New Richmond museum.

Motion Carried (1 abstained vote)

Patron - After some discussion, it was determined that no action is to be taken on the subject of Patron at this time.

Agenda for General Meeting - With the exception of moving the Colour Ceremony to the first item on the agenda, the agenda prepared by the Convention Committee will be followed.

12. Future of the Hong Kong Veterans Association of Canada:

The National President presented the Position paper circulated prior to the meeting. He focused on four points: a) the age of the H.K. veterans; b) the incapability because of health of most H.K. veterans to undertake administrative/organizational activities; c) the ever increasing difficulty for H.K. veterans to travel; and d) the main purposes for which the National Executive was formed have been met.

Excerpts from the National President's presentation:

"We have to make a decision on the future today! Where do we want this association to go? How long do we go on? What happens to our funds? How are the Branches to cope with the inevitable?"

We owe it to those, who worked laboriously over the years to bring our association to the point it is today, not to allow it to become a subject of ridicule. Not to make proper dispositions of our assets, nor to prepare plans for the inevitable, is an insult to the founders and those who followed in their footsteps."

Comrade Speller called for the Branches to discuss the possibilities and to bring their plans to Winnipeg next year. Although he acknowledged that we cannot continue to procrastinate, he felt it necessary to have the matter discussed with the membership in order to proceed with the knowledge that they are behind these phase out activities.

Comrade Cyr reminded all that even today, it will be impossible to get any sizable numbers to Branch meetings because many vets simply cannot travel. Comrade Stroud stressed the need to prepare "our will" so to speak. He feels that as long as needs exist (Pensions, Welfare, etc.) for the remaining vets and widows, some form of association must continue to exist.

Comrade Doddridge said he wanted to see a motion come out of this meeting that will enable the branches to discuss this in order to come to an agreement among Branches on a plan that will ultimately control the demise of the Hong Kong Veterans Association of Canada in an orderly and dignified manner. This plan should be brought before the next General Assembly of the association.

Comrade Stroud commented that any such plan should include the newly formed Commemorative Association in order that some form of continuity exists.

Comrade Darrah stated that in some degree, this direction has already been taken by the Maritimes - Gaspesian Branch, although he conceded that a uniform approach is more desirable. They came to the realization several years ago, that if it wasn't for the families, they could have never held a reunion. Over the past years with the families at the helm, reunions have been very successful.

Comrade Nelson said he felt along the lines expressed by Phil Doddridge. He wishes to circulate this paper to his membership and get their opinions. His position is that there are many dues paying members who do not participate in Conventions or reunions, yet their observations and/or suggestions must be heard.

Comrade Cyr commented that all the views expressed shared the common need for being prepared. The proposal documented in the handout is but the first step in the overall process. The National Executive Council was the last to be formed in the birth of the association and logically it is the first requiring change to start in its demise. "We have to find a way to meet the ongoing needs of the membership without everyone travelling halfway across Canada every year. It is the responsibility of this council to point the way; to lead by example and show that change need not be at the neglect of the membership. Whereas Philip Doddridge's suggestion is truly the "democratic" way, we have waited too long and must exercise the power given to us as Branch Presidents to take some action. The reality is that our death rate does not allow us to delay further. The time to act is now! We have to make a decision tonight and bring it before the membership tomorrow."

Comrade Fred Mason stated that he agreed with the need to start the process, but he cautioned that safeguards must be built in to ensure that ongoing pension and care issues are continued to be dealt with by approaching DVA and the like.

Comrade Cyr agreed wholeheartedly. He stated the proposal contains a mechanism, not only to safeguard, but to strengthen this aspect of the association's affairs. This is the primary function at the national level and that the Hong Kong Veterans Association of Canada will continue to exist until the death of the second last veteran. Also the proposal contains a mechanism whereby the responsibilities currently resting with each and every member of the National Council AS IT EXISTS today, is abolished. Additionally, the proposal clarifies exactly the current business activity of the Executive (i.e. Pensions & Welfare relating to both veterans and widows), must be enshrined in any new administrative format. A Pensions & Welfare Officer, a permanent position for as long as the incumbent is willing and able to fulfill the function, will represent our people at the governmental level. He will be fed the cases and pertinent information from the Branches which will continue to operate as long as possible, and which are closer to the situation thus permitting adequate monitoring of the situations that occur.

There is also a need for what the position paper defines as a Public Relations Officer. This person must be able to speak to, and be able to "mange", the government and media. This task can only be undertaken by a Hong Kong veteran, for no other can speak for, or has the right to represent, all H.K. Veterans. This person must watch carefully the actions of the government and the media to prevent an erosion of our status as an independent body. This person must have contacts inside these two bodies to "keep his finger on the pulse" of what is being thought in the inner circles.

There will remain a Treasurer's function, and of course, these positions need to be

supported by a secretary to maintain the files and handle the paper work.

The social component of our organization has always been a need within our ranks. This is a critical component which enables us to be strengthened and to strengthen others who can only understand our position because they have lived through it themselves. The sons and daughters of the Commemorative Association have pledged to continue these gatherings for as long as we want them. Over the past years, they have worked side by side with the veterans in charge and thus have gained the necessary experience, and by their youth, have the necessary energy to handle the task.

This annual gathering is more important collectively than other concerns, and a great concern remains for the social concerns of the association. It remains for this group to say if future conventions will occur or if the association will resign itself to having Branch gatherings only. Concerning Pensions & Welfare issues, Comrade Atkinson reported that Derrill Henderson accompanied him to Charlottetown as a start to the learning process that will eventually equip Derrill to continue the face-to-face challenges with DVA concerning Pension and Welfare issues once there is no H.K. veteran capable of the task. At this last meeting, we were informed that, as of June 1997, Pensions were being paid to 429 H.K. veterans and 306 H.K. widows. Of the 429, 279 are receiving less than 98% medical disability. That adds up to 159 veterans at 100% disability pension. A copy of these figures will accompany the Minutes of this meeting. On page two of the proposal, reference is made to the death rate of H.K. veterans. At the National convention in 1993, 42 veterans had died since the previous convention. In 1995, the number was 57. This year it is 69, and by 1999 we can easily expect the list to grow to 98 veterans. Comrade Cyr stated that as of today, Brigade has 21 survivors on the association's role, Royal Rifles have 197, and the Grenadiers have 142, and the remaining 8 non "C" Force H.K. POWs. This is a total of 368, whereas the government shows 429. It was strongly felt that the government's number includes non "C" Force personnel, even though it is acknowledged that not all "C" Force are members of the association.

Comrade Speller acknowledged that change is inevitable, but felt that the Branches should be consulted for suggestions. Comrade Cyr agreed that, at the Branch level, this has to take place for each Branch has different needs and logistics which will differ from one another, but concerning the National level, there are no better qualified individuals than those seated around this table. Due to their years at the head of their Branches, only they fully understand the operations of the National Council, and thus they cannot shirk the responsibility given them by their members. The decision rests in our hands, here, today. We must accept the fact that travel for the veterans is just becoming too demanding. The number of veterans still fit to travel are very few.

Comrade Nelson said that they started by bringing in the wives to help out, and now, if it were not for the McCorristers and Camerons of the Commemorative Association, their Branch could not function. Comrade Cyr stated that the Branches will have to go through the same exercise that we are facing tonight. The position paper concerns itself with the National level, but it can be used as a guideline for Branch considerations.

Comrade Cyr stated that it is incumbent upon us to resolve the issue tonight. Collectively, we are afraid to make a decision for it means that we must face our mortality. Even though the Commemorative Association can help in many areas, NO ONE can speak on behalf of a Hong

Kong Vet but a Hong Kong vet. The position paper contains this assurance and ensures continuity.

Comrade Cyr asked for final thoughts from those present. Comrade Atkinson feels we should follow through with the propositions in the paper, for they have obviously been well thought out, and the Branch structure will remain as is for the present. Comrade Ken Ewing expressed the need for the new positions by the General assembly. The National President interjects that any motion made by the National Council regarding reorganization has to be ratified by the General assembly. Comrades Nelson and Stroud stated that they have been thinking along these lines over the past few years and that the position paper seems to cover the needed reorganization quite well, although some fine tuning might have to be made as it is put into practice. Comrade Stroud added that the Branch Presidents must start this process within the Branches. Comrade Speller agreed it is time to made a motion to this end. Comrade Peterson also agreed. Comrade Doddridge admitted he had reservations, but at the same time does not see a choice, a decision has to be made. We have procrastinated to the point where any alternatives have been eliminated. Comrade Darrah agreed with his comrades , we have to act.

Comrade Cyr reminded all present, that whatever the wording of the motion, if ratified by the General assembly, it will have to be in place by next year's meeting in Winnipeg.

Page 11 of the position paper contains the draft wording of a motion creating an Affairs Office as described in the paper. Comrade Atkinson requested that the word "council" be removed for it causes confusion as to interpretation. Discussion followed and the motion was reworded as follows:

MOTION:

Moved by: Harry Atkinson
Seconded by: Philip Doddridge

that the Hong Kong Veterans Association of Canada be organizationally restructured so as to better meet our present and future needs. Where as the Branch set-up as it now exists is to remain in place unchanged for the time being, the re-structuring at the National level to be thus: (1) phase out of the National Council component, and (2) create centrally administered functions of Public Relations Officer, Pension & Welfare Officer, Treasurer and Secretariat.

Motion carried unanimously

13. Adjournment:

This concluding the agenda, the National President called for a motion of adjournment.

MOTION:

Moved by: John Stroud
Seconded by: Lionel Speller
that the meeting be adjourned.

Motion Carried

The meeting adjourned at 22:35 hours.