

Adjournment Motion

put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the proceedings.

Shall Agriculture—Vote 1 carry?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Agriculture—Vote 1 agreed to.

The Deputy Chairman: Shall I report the resolution?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Resolution reported and concurred in.

● (2200)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

VETERANS AFFAIRS—SUGGESTED PROVISION OF PRO-RATED PENSION FOR WIDOWS OF PENSIONERS WHOSE DISABILITY WAS LESS THAN 48 PER CENT

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, May 17, as recorded in *Hansard*, page 13561, I put the following question to my hon. friend, the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald):

Now that Bill C-92, which provides compensation for Canadian veterans who were pensioners of war, is in effect, will the minister and his department study the possibility of bringing in legislation to implement one of the recommendations of the Seventh Report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs which was not included in Bill C-92, namely, the provision of pro-rated pensions for widows of veterans where the veteran's disability pension was less than 48 per cent.

I was grateful to the minister on Monday for at least leaving the door open, and I am grateful to him for being here this evening for this late show when we are discussing this important question.

A great deal of gratitude is being expressed by veterans in this country for Bill C-92, which provides compensation for former prisoners of war. But there are some who are aware of the fact that when the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs recommended the provisions which are now in Bill C-92, it also recommended what was implied in my question, that the Pension Act should be amended to provide pro-rated pensions for widows of veterans where the veteran's disability pension was less than 48 per cent. As hon. members are aware, if a veteran was on a pension of 48 per cent or more, his widow draws a full widow's pension under the Pension Act. But if the veteran's disability pension was less than 48 per cent, the widow is cut off completely from any widow's pension as a matter of right.

This matter has been the subject of discussion for many years, and I can say that in recent years the Standing

[The Deputy Chairman.]

Committee on Veterans Affairs has recommended, at least three or perhaps four times, a provision such as the one contained in the report we tabled on June 12, 1975.

The minister is aware of the arguments, just as I am, and I shall not try to repeat them tonight; but I do feel that now that we have Bill C-92 on the statute books, this piece of unfinished business should be raised again so that we can press the minister to push hard for it both in the department and with his colleagues in cabinet. It seems most unfair that there is this cut-off point. None of us has ever suggested that the widow's pension should be 100 per cent in the case where the veteran's disability pension was of a low percentage but we are suggesting that where the veteran's disability pension was below 48 per cent there should be a pro-rated pension for the widow of that veteran.

I appeal to the minister's concern in this matter, to his well established sympathy for veterans' widows, and to the capacity he has shown to win at least some gains from his fellow cabinet ministers.

Before I sit down may I remind the minister that in my supplementary question the other day I also referred to the fact that, although the committee had recommended that the compensation for prisoners of war should be available to all former prisoners of war, the act as it is now on the statute books covers only those who were prisoners of war in World War II. The number of World War I veterans who were prisoners and are still alive is now very limited and I hope consideration may be given to covering them, as well, under an amended form of Bill C-92.

I again thank the minister for coming back this evening to hear my pleas on these two points. I do not expect an answer tonight as to when legislation is going to be introduced, but I do express the hope that he will work hard on these two important points.

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to reply to the question by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) regarding the suggested provision of pro-rated pensions for widows of pensioners whose disability was less than 48 per cent.

I am aware, and the government is aware, that recommendations have been made to provide pro rata pensions for widows of disability pensioners. At the present time a widow will be pensioned if her husband's death was attributable to service or was incurred during wartime. In addition, if her husband's pensionable disabilities were assessed at 48 per cent or more during his lifetime, she would be eligible for widow's pension.

I believe that percentage was selected because at that rate they were obviously seriously disabled and it was considered that the pensionable condition might play a part, however small, in the pensioner's death. On the other hand, if someone is pensioned at 5 per cent for flat feet and dies from a different cause, his death bears no relationship to his pensioned condition and the question arises as to whether a pension should be paid for an unrelated death.

Canada does not take a back seat to any country in so far as our pension legislation is concerned. The benefits we provide for the disabled serviceman or woman or their surviving dependants are far greater than those provided