

should take place with the producers who are most seriously affected by this legislation.

May I call it six o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member who, I know, will continue with vigour at eight o'clock this evening but, for the moment, in accordance with Standing Order 40 and with our revised procedures for this month on additional hours of sitting, we will proceed to the adjournment debate.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

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

VETERANS AFFAIRS—DEER LODGE HOSPITAL—REQUEST FOR REPORT ON NEGOTIATIONS WITH MANITOBA FOR TRANSFER

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, recently there have been confusing reports appearing in the Winnipeg press in regard to the Deer Lodge Veterans Hospital. These news stories concerning the possible transfer of Deer Lodge Hospital from the federal government to the province of Manitoba have only served further to confuse and worry the veterans and employees of that hospital. The confusing reports on Deer Lodge Hospital do not do anything to answer the serious concerns of the veterans, veterans organizations and the employees of Deer Lodge Hospital. I contend there are far too many serious concerns that have not been answered by the government in regard to the future of Deer Lodge Hospital while they have dragged on the negotiations.

● (1800)

From the veterans' point of view there are such serious matters as the quality of health care for veterans should the hospital be taken over by the province of Manitoba, whether veterans will receive priority at the hospital, and indeed, whether the same special care for veterans will remain. From the employees' point of view, there are such things as staff pensions, job security, wages and staff size.

I am speaking about Deer Lodge Hospital today to request that if the federal government and the province of Manitoba do reach an agreement on the Deer Lodge Hospital, under no circumstances should the agreement be signed right away. The agreement should be referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs so that all the concerns of the veterans and employees might be thoroughly looked into. I am sure that veterans' organizations such as the Royal Canadian Legion, the Army, Navy and Air Force veterans and others have concerns and suggestions to offer on the future of Deer Lodge. I am also sure that the employees' union at Deer Lodge have

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representations to make on behalf of the employees. The agreement should not be signed until a satisfactory arrangement has been worked out in the best interests of the veterans and employees of Deer Lodge Hospital.

I feel that referring the matter to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs would give veterans the opportunity to express their ideas and concerns on such matters as the quality of care after provincial governments have assumed control of veterans' hospitals.

On February 28 of this year the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) said in this House in reference to the transfer of veterans' hospitals to the provinces:

The ones we have transferred so far have been quite successful and we are reasonably pleased with the treatment the veterans are receiving. We get this reaction from the veterans' organizations and we also get it from the veterans themselves.

If that is the case, I wonder why, then, did every member of parliament receive a letter from the Veterans' Rights Association of British Columbia expressing serious concern over the former veterans' hospital in Victoria? For the record I should like to quote that letter. The letter, addressed to all members of parliament, reads:

On behalf of our membership we would like to make you aware of the problems created for veterans on Vancouver Island through the operation and administration of the former veterans hospital in Victoria.

We can assure you that, should the DVA facility in or near your region be transferred to a provincial or community authority, your veteran constituents will receive a lesser standard of care and a derogation of their rights under the veterans charter.

Believe us when we say that assurances of and from the federal government are not worth a farthing.

The takeover here has been handled by deceit and a complete lack of concern and comprehension, especially by the Minister of Veterans Affairs and his deputy minister.

May we remind you that the sense of comradeship and duty, hardened in the furnace of war, has not left the veterans, even though they are thought to be a tiny minority and have lived on into an age when numbers and votes, pressure groups and self seekers, sensation and scandal drowns the small voice of those who served selflessly and faithfully.

Accordingly, at a general meeting, this association passed the following resolutions which we would ask that you support:

- A. That the Government of Canada guarantee that the veterans treatment regulations be applied equally across Canada.
- B. That the Government of Canada reaffirm the veterans charter.
- C. That the province of British Columbia will administer treatment regulations as if they were so obliged by law.
- D. That Canada and British Columbia re-negotiate the transfer agreement entered into to give effect to the intent of the agreement, and
- E. That, inter alia, veterans have a greater, and not nominal, representation on DVA hospitals' boards of directors.

This letter was signed by F. C. P. Foy, Executive Director of the Veterans' Rights Association of B.C. That letter covers the types of things the veterans in the area served by Deer Lodge Hospital are worried about. These problems can be avoided by referring the whole matter to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs after an agreement has been negotiated. I believe the Royal Canadian Legion's Manitoba and northwestern Ontario command had the same concerns when it passed a