

In addition, I wanted to assure the hon. member that we are not yet satisfied with the explanation and we are pursuing our inquiries. We expect a much fuller result from the inquiries we have made.

Mr. Hales: Mr. Speaker, I think it is a long-standing rule of this House that when a member reads from a document, whether personal or otherwise, it must be tabled. I must, therefore, ask the minister to table it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has quoted the rule correctly. I think it would have been open to the hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs to refer in general terms to the letter. When he receives a letter and quotes from it, this does not mean he automatically has to table it. There may be a feeling among hon. members that he should not be required to do so. However, when the matter is raised by way of a point of order a ruling has to be made and the rule is very clear that when a document is quoted by the minister or whoever quotes it, that member is required to table it.

The minister states that this is a personal letter. As is well known to hon. members, the rule refers to official documents. It now becomes a question of determining whether the document in question is an official one or whether it is a personal letter. It would have been much easier had the minister not quoted from it, but I would think, in view of the fact it is a formal communication, that makes it a formal document and under the rules of the House the hon. minister would be required to table it.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, if I may speak to the point of order, I really have no objection to tabling the letter.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Well, table it.

Mr. Sharp: It was addressed to me in the form of a personal letter and I felt, therefore, that I should ask the minister whether he has any objection, and I do not think he will.

Mr. Diefenbaker: You should not have quoted from it.

Mr. Baldwin: Let the House judge whether it is official or personal.

Mr. Speaker: In view of the undertaking by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and perhaps he will have communication with the hon. member for Wellington, it may be easier later on, by consent of the House, to determine whether the letter in question ought to be tabled.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

INQUIRY AS TO LEGISLATION TO INCREASE BASIC RATE OF DISABILITY PENSION

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Veterans Affairs. In view of the hope the minister expressed on May 17 that he would be able to table before

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the end of May a bill to amend—don't look at your watch, look at your calendar—that he would be able to introduce a bill to amend the Pension Act so as to increase the basic rate of war disability pensions, can the minister say whether he will meet that commitment within the next three days?

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, first of all I should like to inform the hon. member that there is a calendar on my watch. I cannot give a formal commitment on this today, it being May 28, but when I have it available it will be brought to your attention.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member might be allowed to ask a supplementary, after which I will recognize the hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth.

POSSIBILITY DELAY IN LEGISLATION CAUSED BY FAILURE OF CABINET TO AGREE ON BASIC RATE OF PENSION

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Will he indicate to the House whether the Cabinet has agreed to the new formula in respect of the basic rate of pension and that legislation is to come forth on that basis? Has the Cabinet agreed or is that the reason the bill has not been presented?

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as I explained the other day, the item is before Cabinet, but no final or full agreement has been reached as yet.

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PENITENTIARIES

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE ON PRISONS—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF ITEMS ON AGENDA

Mr. Sean O'Sullivan (Hamilton-Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General. In view of the announcement today from Collins Bay penitentiary of yet another failure under the temporary absence system, namely the case of David Lawrence who failed to return after being granted temporary leave, will the minister advise whether the temporary absence system is on the agenda for the conference announced by the minister of federal and provincial authorities on the prison system in Canada?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): No, Mr. Speaker, but I will have some announcement to make perhaps later this week in respect of the temporary absence and parole system.

Mr. O'Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question in connection with the announcement later this week. Can the minister advise us whether he will be making a statement on motions outlining the agenda for the proposed conference of federal and provincial governments respecting prisons, and will he table all the corre-