

and it may be of wider interest than just to Senator Marshall. I would be quite happy to read the answer in case he wishes to ask a supplementary, or I would be glad to put the answer on the record.

Senator Marshall: It should be put on the record.

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(The answer follows:)

When Bill C-40 was introduced it was with the purpose of providing additional assistance to veterans and widows to the fullest extent possible. This additional assistance took the form of providing further benefits under the War Veterans Allowance Act. The major benefit under the Pension Act was the introduction of proportionate pensions for widows. This new benefit will eventually provide pensions for the qualified widows of all disability pensioners who received a monthly pension in their lifetimes regardless of whether their death resulted from military service, or the degree of the disability. This is a major improvement in pension benefits available to surviving widows. Unfortunately the institution of such a benefit is costly. The late Minister of Veterans Affairs was only able to recommend provision of this benefit on the basis that it would be introduced gradually over a period of six and a half years. In that period of time it is anticipated that about 26,000 widows who are not now receiving any benefit under the pension act will become eligible and will receive a widow's pension.

The widows of pensioners who were more seriously disabled, and whose disabilities were assessed at from 38 per cent to 47 per cent are now eligible for the new benefits. The survivors of the next most seriously disabled group, those at the 33-per-cent to 37-per-cent level, will be eligible for widow's benefits on April 1, 1981. The government is most sympathetic to the widows of all pensioners, and if the fiscal situation improves, it will be prepared to re-examine the timetable for the introduction of the benefits.

In the meantime, if the widow of any disability pensioner is experiencing difficulty in managing on her income, the Department of Veterans Affairs has other programs which could be of help to her.

With reference to a revision in the basic rate of pension for veterans, pension rates are adjusted from time to time and the most recent adjustment in 1978 brought the rates into line with the formula which was established in 1973. In addition, the rates are adjusted in January of each year in keeping with the consumer price index. The most recent adjustment of 8.9 per cent took place on January 1, 1980.

Because of this method of increasing pensions the basic rate is now \$739.71 a month. This is the amount paid to an unmarried pensioner whose disability pension is assessed at 100 per cent. The comparable amount received by the composite public servant—the average of the five selected categories of unskilled public servant—is

\$753.30 a month after income tax is deducted at the rate in effect for the province with the lowest income tax rate.

Pensions will be increased in accordance with consumer price index changes on January 1, 1981. The increase will be 9.7 per cent which means that the basic rate of pension will be \$811.46 a month. The comparable amount received by the composite public servant, after deduction of income tax at the rate in effect for the province with the lowest tax rate is \$818.91 a month.

There are no plans to change the present system in the near future.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS—STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE—GOVERNMENT POLICY

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a delayed answer to a question asked by Senator Macquarrie on November 18 concerning the Canadian position on human rights violations.

I can confirm for the Honourable Senator Macquarrie that it is indeed the policy of the Government of Canada to speak out against the repression and suppression of human rights in all countries. For example, officials of the Department of External Affairs have expressed Canada's concerns to Salvadorian officials both here in Ottawa and in El Salvador on numerous occasions about the deteriorating situation involving human rights in that country. Canadian concerns have also been expressed directly to Guatemalan authorities both here and in Guatemala on the growing level of violence in that country. Canadian concerns for the respect of human rights in Argentina have been made clear to the Argentine authorities on a number of occasions in both Ottawa and Buenos Aires.

Canada has placed considerable emphasis on efforts to create effective United Nations mechanisms for protecting human rights on a worldwide basis.

Also, Canada has repeatedly condemned apartheid in South Africa, most recently in the address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs to the UNGA on September 22, as an affront to human dignity. Canada has manifested its opposition to apartheid in a concrete manner by taking steps to phase out governmental support for trade and commercial relations with South Africa. Canada urges the South African government to implement meaningful reforms to promote equal rights for all South Africans. A continuation of apartheid jeopardizes the peace and security of South Africans of all races.

CANADA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS

GARRISON DAM PROJECT

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a delayed answer to a question asked by Senator Roblin on November 19, 1980, concerning the Garrison Dam project.