

Oral Questions

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I will follow that up, but it is contrary to the information received from the shipping companies.

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AIR TRANSPORT**DIVISION OF CHARTER TRAFFIC AS BETWEEN CANADA AND UNITED STATES UNDER NEW AGREEMENT**

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question of the Minister of Transport. Yesterday the hon. member for Témiscamingue asked the minister a question about air charter and other air traffic agreements and the minister replied that the bilateral agreements had been initialed. Would the minister reveal to the House the details of how charter traffic is to be shared between the United States and Canada?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, it is going to be phased in over a period of a few years. For the first two years, I think, the Americans will be entitled to 10 per cent of the traffic to Florida and 10 per cent to Hawaii, with an average for all the other sun spots of, say, 15 per cent. For the two following years it will be 20 per cent to Florida and 20 per cent to Hawaii, with an average of 25 per cent. From 1978 on it will be 25 per cent for each of Florida and Hawaii, and I think a 35 per cent average.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, in view of the complexity of the agreements and their long-range effects, would the minister be agreeable, particularly in light of the fact that the United States government has to ratify the agreements, to refer the subject of these bilateral air agreements, and especially the charter arrangements, to the transport committee at an early date?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, as soon as it is signed I can refer it to the committee, yes.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member may ask a further supplementary, following which the Chair will recognize the hon. member for Fraser Valley East.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is fairly simple. In the one case the United States government, which means its legislators—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member was recognized for the purpose of asking a supplementary question.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I was about to ask whether the minister would be prepared to do this prior to ratification by the cabinet and the United States government.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): No, Mr. Speaker. I do not think it has ever been done in the past. We may be right or wrong in signing the agreement, and if it is not a good agreement we can be criticized. But I do not see how we can negotiate with a foreign country, reach an agreement, then refer it to a committee and then the committee says it does not agree with the agreement. In such circumstances it would be useless to enter into negotiations with any country in the world.

[Mr. Reynolds.]

VETERANS AFFAIRS**REQUEST THAT DEPARTMENT INCREASE STAFF TO SPEED UP PROCESSING OF PENSION APPLICATIONS**

Mr. Alex Patterson (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. In view of the continuing, long delay in the processing of applications for pensions, and the fact that many veterans will pass away before their applications are considered, does the minister propose to seek additional personnel and resources to speed up the processing of these applications, thereby alleviating the hardships that many of these veterans are presently undergoing through the effects of inflation?

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to report that the processing of applications has been speeded up considerably in my department. We have taken on additional staff, commissioners, and so on. I should like to inform the House that it takes some time for people to learn to cope with medical problems and with the legislation, but we have added some back-up staff which has just about completed its work. Pretty soon I shall be able to report to the House of Commons on the situation. But we are progressing quite well.

Mr. Patterson: Would the minister advise whether his department is catching up on the backlog, and can he say why those who made application several years ago are still waiting? They are between 70 and 80 years of age now.

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): Mr. Speaker, when put in those terms it does not sound very cheerful. Many of our applicants are now on pension. The 1971 legislation which was brought in by the previous government encouraged many veterans to reapply. As a result, the process is a long one; but the backlog is being decreased.

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ENERGY**GOVERNMENT ACTION TO ENSURE OIL SUPPLIES TO EASTERN CANADA AT LOWER THAN INTERNATIONAL PRICE**

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Yesterday in reply to the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe the minister said that the long-term thrust is to secure for Canadian industry oil and petroleum products that flow from oil at a price lower than the international price. Having regard to the fact that Quebec and the Atlantic provinces are now paying international prices for oil, what short-term industrial strategy does the minister have to implement the long-term objective of the government?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member should put the question in balance. For some years Quebec and the maritime provinces have had the advantage of a lower oil price than the rest of Canada. It may take some years until we have reached full self-sufficiency.