

*Adjournment Debate*

I hope that any bill that is introduced in this session will provide a better level of pensions for widows of veterans where the veteran's disability rate was below 48 per cent, and I hope it will be made effective right away, not year by year over a period of five or six years.

As we all know, this is a matter that has been the subject of many studies and reports. Perhaps the most outstanding are the Woods report of a number of years ago and more recently the Hermann report, both of which recommended that there should be pensions for widows where the veteran's disability rate was below 48 per cent.

This matter has also been recommended to the House by veterans affairs committees on two or three occasions. In fact I believe the Deputy Speaker, who is now in the chair, was a member of the veterans affairs committee when we made such a recommendation. It just does not make sense that there is a cutoff at the 48 per cent point, which means in one case the widow of a veteran has a full widow's pension but where the veteran's pension rate was only 47 per cent there is nothing there at all for the widow if her husband goes first.

● (2205)

I know the Minister of Veterans Affairs feels as all of us do with regard to this matter. The statements he made to the media before the House resumed seemed to confirm it—he indicated he had been planning a bill along the lines of the very legislation the hon. member for Victoria brought in last December. I am not asking the minister to tell us the details of what will be in the bill; that would be contrary to the rules around here. But surely he can tell us, as he told the media before this House sat, that he will be bringing in a bill to provide pensions for these widows.

In my supplementary question the other day I asked whether the minister would look at a few other matters such as the long-promised review of the War Veterans Allowance Act so that it might be brought up to date. There is also the question of certain improvements which need to be made in the amounts payable under the Compensation for Former Prisoners of War Act. These are on the minister's desk in detailed form.

I assert quite readily that we have made a great deal of progress in terms of veterans' legislation in the last eight or ten years, but there are still these few matters which are as yet unresolved, and I think most of the veterans in this country would agree with me that at the top of the list is the need to protect the position of the widows of disabled veterans. I hope, tonight, that the minister, whose presence I welcome at this hour of the evening, will have a favourable statement to make to this House.

**Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question as it gives me the opportunity to comment on the matter of pensions for widows of veterans who were in receipt of disability pensions at a rate less than 48 per cent, and to inform

members as to the status of the war veterans allowance legislative review.

As hon. members know, the previous government had introduced in the House suggested changes to the Pension Act to enable widows to receive pension benefits upon the death of a veteran who had a pensioned disability assessed at less than 48 per cent. I expect to present my cabinet colleagues with proposals which will provide pension benefits to widows of disability pensioners who are not now eligible for such benefits. The proposals which were contained in Bill C-28 will be carefully considered to determine whether or not they can be improved upon.

The main criterion of the war veterans allowance legislative review has been that there will be continuing compensation paid to veterans under the WVA Act in recognition of their wartime contribution to this nation. Within this criterion, numerous proposals have been developed by the department, and I am pleased to report that the review has produced some very significant recommendations directed toward improving the lot of veterans and their dependants. Further, a continuing joint study has been undertaken with the Department of National Health and Welfare in order to achieve a greater level of harmony in the administration of income security policy and to identify opportunities for streamlining the administration of the MVA Program, both issues of major concern to the legislative review.

Mr. Speaker, in my view, we can never fully compensate those Canadians who have suffered the effects of war, but we can continue to ensure that their special status is fully recognized and that veterans and their dependants will continue to receive the assistance they require to meet their basic needs and to live in dignity. I know this view is shared by all members of this House.

While I am very anxious to introduce changes to the War Veterans Allowance Act as quickly as possible, it is necessary that they be examined in relation to other social policy initiatives. However, in the coming months I hope to be able to make a definitive statement on this subject.

● (2210)

## ENERGY—EXPORT OF NATURAL GAS TO UNITED STATES

**Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak tonight on the topic of exports of natural gas and the pre-building of the Alaska Highway natural gas pipeline. My topic arises from a question I put to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) in this House on April 17.

Before I go into that in detail I want to say, as an aside, that when I listened to this surprise mini-budget tonight in the House, I noted that the minister had to say that it had cost the Canadian taxpayer a \$1.5 billion increase in the last little while to pay for imported oil under the oil import compensation program, and I thought back to the time of Joe Greene who used to be minister of energy in a Liberal government, who said "We have energy for hundreds of years in Canada".