

Expedition of Public Services

change this barbarous procedure. They say they are studying the matter and will bring in a white paper. Where is that white paper? In the interval, thousands and thousands of people are being made the subject of deportation orders. This is totally unnecessary.

This is the type of thing which is on one's record for life. At a future date, if a person were to ask for citizenship he would be asked whether he had ever been subject to a deportation order. That person must answer yes even though the deportation order may have been vacated. This is what I call an insistence upon an unjust society. I believe this is a situation in which thousands upon thousands of people in this country are suffering injustice from a bureaucratic system. Nothing is being done about this. This is the reason I make this protest.

This situation could be changed very easily. I invite hon. members to turn their attention to this matter. It is a narrow field. There are not hundreds of thousands of people affected; there are only a few people affected, but they are people in the main who are unable to defend themselves unless we speak up in this House. I am very pleased today to speak up on behalf of every one of them and I invite my colleagues to do so as well.

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the resolution and I am not worried, as the parliamentary secretary is, about the broad sweep of its language. The resolution was intended to identify a serious problem which governments face and which this government faces in respect of its credibility because of, if I may put it fairly, lack of efficiency in adjudication of some of the claims. This is a serious matter and one on which I believe the House does well to spend a few hours.

This is a government which speaks of its flow charts and boasts about the efficiency of its organization. All this, I am sure, may be excellent but unfortunately a flow chart is quite lacking in compassion. I listened to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Perrault) tell us about the number of cheques which are going out each week. I think this is something for which the government may well take credit. But while we play this numbers game in respect of totals we must remember—the parliamentary secretary and the minister are well aware of this because they had to go to extraordinary lengths to provide members of parliament with facilities to deal with the many thousands of cases which do not appear in the statistics—that these are not all “plus” statistics, if I might put it that way.

We respect those public servants who are doing a superb job in trying to handle the difficulties and we welcome the special telephone numbers, although I must say I somewhat resent the fact that a member of parliament is given the privilege of using a special number when members of the public who are entitled to it because of their contribution are unable to have the service. There is something in the way of elitism or unpleasantness about this. Surely each citizen should be able to reach the Unemployment Insurance Commission and other government boards without the need of this sort of intermediary pressure.

The particular aspect I wish to speak about today is the unconscionable delay which was alluded to by my friend

[Mr. Béchard.]

the hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand (Mr. Knowles) in respect of the adjudication of Canada Pension Plan claims particularly in so far as the disability aspect is concerned. This is not a matter of privilege. What is being adjudicated upon under the disability section of the Canada Pension Plan is a right which has been bought and paid for by the individual citizen who participates in the plan. I believe it is quite unconscionable that people who are at a very serious stage because of ill health must go through a period of delay month upon month. My hon. friend spoke about delays of six months. When we inquire about situations in respect of the Canada Pension Plan we are told quite casually by officials that there is a six months' waiting period.

I genuinely wished to take part in this debate today to say this is quite an unacceptable procedure. We were all here and took part in the debate in respect of the Canada Pension Plan and there was no question, when we passed that statute, that there would be a six months' delay. Certainly, when the head of a family is stricken because of ill health there should be no question of a six months waiting period. This is an example of straight bureaucratic inefficiency.

This resolution is designed to identify the problem to the government and, with the greatest respect, is an attempt to get the government off its celebrated status quo to which the parliamentary secretary alluded. There can be no excuse for a six months' delay in respect of disability pensions. I have had several cases involving a lengthy waiting period. I had an unfortunate case recently under the Canada Pension Plan involving an orphan who waited for entitlement from January until July 1971. It is no wonder governments are thought of cynically. There is a credibility gap, if I may use a cliché. It is no wonder governments are under pressure from the public when such unnecessary delays occur.

The motion also included a reference to delays in passport applications. I give the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) credit for the opening of regional offices. It is somewhat ironic, when one department centralizes, which is the case in respect of the unemployment insurance offices which are being centralized, that the Secretary of State for External Affairs has recognized a need for decentralization and has set up offices in Vancouver, Edmonton, Montreal and Halifax to mention but a few. However, there still remains a very serious problem in respect of processing passport applications. I do not know whether the House is interested in these sort of anecdotal references, but they are the only way in which a member of parliament can personalize individual cases. This brings flesh and blood into what otherwise would be a series of meaningless statistics.

• (1730)

Presently I am trying to deal with the passport application of a man who served this country in World War I and World War II. He has his World War I army discharge certificate. He has a notarized copy of his entry in the family Bible. He has an identification card with his fingerprints and photograph, and with the signature of the Deputy Minister of Munitions and Supply, which allowed him to go in and out of the offices in which he worked in