

am not just confident but convinced that Petro-Canada managed its negotiations in the way these things should be managed in any business deal or in any business negotiations. I am quite convinced that there has been no leak of information from Petro-Canada in this regard. I have checked this matter personally. If there is additional evidence which can be brought forward, I will obviously have it investigated thoroughly, but there has to be some evidence, which is more than just vague allegations, to charge that anything improper might have been done by anybody having anything to do with Petro-Canada.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

DELAY IN PAYMENT OF PENSIONS TO WIDOWS OF VETERANS— REQUEST FOR REMEDIAL ACTION

Hon. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is for the acting Minister of Veterans Affairs. My colleagues decided that this question should be our first one today in order to indicate our concern that there should be no further delay in the introduction of legislation respecting veterans and their survivors.

In view of the fact that many widows are having to wait four, five or six years for pensions to which they are entitled by a law passed by this Parliament last July, can the minister now say when he will be bringing in legislation to eliminate or shorten the phasing-in period in that legislation?

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence and Acting Minister of Veterans Affairs): Madam Speaker, I appreciate very much the concern of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre about the veterans' question. I can assure this House that I am just as concerned that some improvement can be made to the present system for pensions. I can assure the hon. gentleman that I am examining this question today with my officials in the ministry. We will have a meeting next week with Legion officials to see what their preferences are with respect to improving the lot of veterans.

The following three questions will probably be debated: accelerating the phasing-in of widows' pensions over six and a half years and less; increasing the WVA single rate to persons under age 65; and extending the aging veterans program to include war veterans allowance recipients. These three major questions will be discussed at these two meetings, and I can assure the hon. member that I will be as diligent as possible in trying to introduce legislation in this House, provided our financial capabilities are there.

ADJUSTMENT OF BENEFIT RATES

Hon. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear about next week's meeting and the attention which is being given to these matters. Will the Acting Minister of Veterans Affairs also put on that list the need to adjust the 100 per cent basic rate of the disability

Oral Questions

pension so that it will automatically stay in line with the average take-home pay of the five categories in the public service designated in 1972, and will he also consider the possibility of reviewing the rates of compensation for former prisoners of war?

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence and Acting Minister of Veterans Affairs): Madam Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that we will look at these two questions in addition to the ones I just mentioned. I appreciate the collaboration of hon. members every time we present legislation in this House. I am sure that regardless of what we present in the future for veterans, hon. members will not be disappointed. As usual, this government will look after them.

● (1430)

Mr. Knowles: Madam Speaker, may I ask the acting minister when he makes his representations to cabinet to remind his cabinet colleagues that the Canadians about whom we are talking did not exercise restraint when they were called to serve their country and that the present so-called restraint policies should not apply to these veterans or their survivors?

Mr. Lamontagne: Madam Speaker, judging by decisions this government has passed with respect to veterans, I do not think a member of cabinet, the present and previous members of cabinet of this government, have ever exercised restraint as far as improving the lot of our veterans is concerned.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

* * *

CORPORATE AFFAIRS

INVESTIGATION OF MATTERS RELATING TO ACQUISITION OF PETROFINA

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Durham-Northumberland): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. It refers to the question of the alleged profits made by insiders on the Petrofina-PetroCan deal. The minister has just heard his seatmate, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources say that there is an investigation taking place into this matter by the ministry of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. My question to him is: what date was this investigation started? What is the legislative authority for conducting it? What are the terms of reference of the investigation?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member did not understand correctly what my seatmate was saying.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Nobody ever does.

Mr. Ouellet: What I can confirm, though, is that, at the request of my seatmate, my officials are looking into this matter under the provisions of the Canada Business Corpora-