

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

Ottawa for some years. Yet Canada, a nation of 21 million, cannot seem to find the interest or the funds to reciprocate by opening a mission in Bridgetown. I must cite a recent announcement by the minister indicating that there is now an intention to open a mission in Barbados and five other areas by 1974. But why are we lagging? Does austerity clutch the external affairs department with its icy hand long after it has relaxed its grip on other free spending departments, for example, that of the Secretary of State?

Bangladesh is the second largest country in the Commonwealth and is one to which we should extend not only recognition, as we have, but to which we should send a high commissioner accredited to that great land and to it alone. So horrendous has been its suffering, so immense are its problems and so great our opportunity for assisting a fellow Commonwealth state that Canada should feel humiliated at its incapacity to upgrade its mission. We should have a full time high commissioner there and an adequate office and staff in Dacca. There is much to do in Bangladesh and I cannot believe the people of Canada want their government pennypinching on this issue. Nor can I believe we do not have adequate personnel to staff such an office.

I am not especially enamoured of the insensitive approach to the problem by the minister when he reported on May 15 that Bangladesh would prefer more aid rather than a resident Canadian high commissioner. This, I think, begs the question in a somewhat gauche and condescending manner.

Mr. Ray Perrault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) announced on April 10 cabinet approval for the opening of six new posts. The proposed new posts will enable Canada to achieve more effectively its national objectives relating to its political, commercial, economic, aid, immigration and consular interests.

Embassies or high commissions will be opened in the following countries: Barbados, Hungary, Korea, Morocco and Zambia. A Canadian consular office already exists in Budapest, and Canadian development offices in Lusaka and Rabat. I would remind the hon. member of this when he comments on the alleged failure of the government to be more active in this field. A consulate general will be opened in Atlanta, Georgia. The posts should all be in full operation in 1974. However, the majority will likely be in partial or full operation sooner, as some elements of the posts are already in place or will be transferred from existing nearby posts. Preparations for the opening of these new posts will begin as soon as possible.

Diplomatic relations were established with Bangladesh on March 20 when our ambassador in Bangkok, Mr. Gordon Cox, in his capacity as representative of the government of Canada to Bangladesh, arrived in Dacca for his first visit. Bangladesh having become a member of the Commonwealth on April 18, our representative has been designated as High Commissioner of Canada to Bangladesh and is expected to present his credentials in that capacity almost immediately. He is probably en route to Dacca at this very minute.

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

A Canadian development team has been assigned to direct the Canadian assistance program in Bangladesh and the first member, who is also a member of the staff of the Canadian representative, has been in Dacca since mid-March. Another member has joined him, to make two on the ground in Dacca. An additional first secretary is being appointed to the embassy in Bangkok to assist the ambassador in his responsibilities toward Bangladesh. He will be spending an increasing amount of time in Dacca, and the facilities available to the development team will be increased so as to permit the operation of a full diplomatic mission as soon as budgetary considerations permit.

PENSIONS—ALLEGED THREAT OF LOSS OF ALLOWANCES OF BLIND PERSONS WORKING ON LIP PROJECTS

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, I find it regrettable that neither the minister nor his parliamentary secretary, the hon. member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet), are here this evening. I do not like to suggest that this is a measure of the seriousness with which the government takes the question I raise this evening, but very obviously it is.

Mr. Francis: There is good reason why he cannot be here.

Mr. Forrestall: If the hon. member has something to say, he may respond. If either of those hon. members are here, then I apologize to both. But it is my understanding that the hon. member for Papineau is the minister's parliamentary secretary and I do not see the minister or that hon. member here. I may be wrong in choosing—

Mr. Francis: Mr. Speaker, by arrangement with the hon. member, who has good reason for not being here, I am prepared and will endeavour to reply.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. The hon. member knows that points of order cannot be raised at this time. The practice and procedures are quite clear in this regard. Members are given the opportunity at this time to make their arguments, and the parliamentary secretary will have the opportunity to reply in due course.

Mr. Forrestall: The only comment I wish to make is that while there may have been arrangements made, they were not made in consultation with me. I appreciate the distinguished gentleman being here this evening to respond.

My question is quite brief and relates to the difficulty faced by people receiving blind pension allowances when they enter into LIP projects. It is quite clear that blind pension allowances are directly within the jurisdiction of provincial governments. I have no illusions about that, but I make no apology for raising the matter of protecting people on blind pension allowances.

The fact is that under existing legislation the federal authority is compelled to recover overpayments to people receiving blind pension allowances. Any income over and above the \$900 allowance, plus \$600 which they are allowed to earn, must be recovered. I am also aware that if these people were receiving benefits under the Canada Assistance Plan they could receive up to \$1,900 before this