

Supply—National Defence

I am prepared to fight the Canadian Pension Commission and the veterans affairs legislation surrounding it over decisions which the commission make. I am also aware of the limitations of the legislation. But the fact is that we have service personnel who in my opinion are not getting proper coverage. I think the minister should be willing to tell us what he is going to do about this and whether he and his colleague will insist that the situation be corrected or an alternative suggested.

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Chairman, in the case my hon. friend has described I can only say that I am surprised the situation was not covered. Perhaps he would be good enough to give me the details, and I can inquire into the matter, unless it has already been looked into. We certainly agree that we have a responsibility in these matters to make sure that justice, or more than justice, is done, and that there is the best possible arrangement made for the dependents of the men and women of the armed forces.

It might interest my hon. friend to know that we have extended the coverage to include United Nations operations, such as in Cyprus, where the risk principle applies. It has not been applied in all areas, such as in Europe and here at home, but we would certainly be willing to take this matter under consideration and see whether it would be possible to provide coverage.

Mr. Peters: The risk principle is not too well known to most people. How is this risk principle applied in Cyprus? It is also probably applied in the Gaza strip, in Israel, and in the Congo.

Mr. Hellyer: Does the hon. member mean, how do we select these areas?

Mr. Peters: Yes, how do you designate an area?

Mr. Hellyer: The extension of the insurance principle to these areas was done under the act by order in council, I think.

Mr. Peters: Is this insurance then paid to the other department? This principle implies a greater risk which cannot be covered in the normal fashion. Is there an interdepartmental accounting system which gives added protection for certain areas?

Mr. Hellyer: No. This is just changing the coverage provided by the act. The application is covered by law under the Canadian Pension Act. There are regulations under the act, and areas of coverage can be extended by

[Mr. Peters.]

regulation. You can extend the insurance principle, as is done in cases of active service, and this same principle would apply in Cyprus and in other areas where we are involved in United Nations operations.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): Mr. Chairman, I would ask the minister to clarify whose responsibility it is to assess an early retirement pension; and whose responsibility was it in the case of pensions based on service going back to the ages of 9, 11 and 12? Is this not the responsibility of the Department of National Defence, or are such cases passed over before retirement to the Department of Veterans Affairs for handling?

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Chairman, the responsibility for this is set by law. Also, what is received is determined by law. The law was merely applied in these cases as it existed, and was administered by the Department of National Defence.

I am now in a position to give the information which—

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): If the minister does not mind I should like to follow up that question, instead of his referring to information he has had prepared for him by somebody else.

● (7:40 p.m.)

Since it is the administrative duty of the Department of National Defence to assess pensions in the cases of early retirement as indicated in the Auditor General's report—I refer to the cases which indicated an enlistment age of 9, 11 and 12—does the minister not feel with regard to men who are now in the forces that he has some responsibility toward servicemen who are killed while in uniform, or in any event while presently serving? I would appeal to him to take into consideration the case of Sergeant Hamood, who was killed in Germany while on his way to work in uniform with his commanding officer. His wife and children have been denied a pension because the Pension Commission insisted that he was not on duty, which is a ridiculous situation. If the minister is fully aware of the fact that he is in uniform, he is on duty.

Mr. Hellyer: This matter is governed by the Pension Act, Mr. Chairman. This department may make representations, but it does not administer the act.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): Will the minister make representations on behalf of Sergeant Hamood who was killed while riding with his commanding officer.