

has been any change, or if any change is contemplated, in dealing with the Chilean refugee problem.

**Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, there are 1,410 refugees, or people who became refugees as a result of the coup, in Canada. A further 460 immigrant visas have been issued, which have not been used. Another 1,350 applications are in process. I think those facts alone put Canada in the forefront of responding to that situation. But there have been new developments. There is an indication that the junta in Chile will be releasing some prisoners from detention there, provided they can find haven elsewhere. In addition, some of the South American countries which accepted on a temporary basis large numbers of refugees from Chile are finding it very difficult to continue sustaining them. We have therefore received representations, in fact a request, from the United Nations High Commissioner to respond again, and we will be doing so forthwith.

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### SOCIAL SECURITY

#### REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE OLD AGE PENSION CHEQUES WILL BE RECEIVED BY CHRISTMAS

**Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham):** Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Along with other members of the House I had assumed that, in conformity with the usual practice, old age pension and family allowance cheques from the government will be received by recipients prior to Christmas. In view of disturbing reports from some old age pensioners who mistakenly believe, I hope, that these cheques have not been mailed in time to be received for Christmas, can the minister assure the House that the normal routine has been followed?

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, yes, the normal routine has been followed, but the hon. member is mistaken as to what has been the past practice. I would ask him to check.

**Mr. Lawrence:** A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Am I correct in assuming that the cheques have been mailed in time, so that old age pensioners will receive them for Christmas?

**Mr. Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, I repeat that the hon. member is quite wrong as to what has been standard practice in previous years with respect to the mailing of cheques of this kind.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. As I understand it, that was not the hon. member's question. The hon. member asked whether the cheques have been mailed in time for old age pensioners to receive them for Christmas.

**Mr. Lawrence:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but my ear-phone was not on.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I suggested that the hon. member did not ask that question. He asked whether the minister could assure the House that these cheques have

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been mailed in time for pensioners to receive them for Christmas. Is that correct?

**Mr. Lawrence:** Mr. Speaker, may I ask my question again. Will the minister assure the House that old age pension and family allowance cheques have been mailed in time for recipients to receive them for Christmas?

**Mr. Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to answer the question. The hon. member prefaced his question with the statement that it was the normal practice to mail these cheques before Christmas. Normal practice has always been that family allowance cheques have been mailed so that they are received before Christmas and that old age pension cheques are received between Christmas and the new year. This will happen again this year and has happened every year in the past as far as the hon. member can go back.

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● (1250)

### IMMIGRATION

#### ISSUANCE OF WORK PERMITS TO GROUPS FROM UNITED STATES WORKING AT NORTHERN ELECTRIC—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. I understand that a considerable number of work permits have been issued to a group of Americans allowing them to work at Northern Electric for some months, that in fact these jobs are routine jobs which could be performed by Canadian workers and that 490 Canadian employees have already been off by Northern Electric. Is the minister aware that there is serious dissatisfaction and unrest among Canadian workers at this company which may lead to work stoppages, and will he take steps to put an end to this practice which seems clearly contrary to the immigration policies announced by the government?

**Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration):** With respect, Mr. Speaker, I must say that the information given by the hon. member is not in conformity with the information I have been able to get. I thank him for giving notice of the question. The American workers are skilled installers of central office equipment. They are here temporarily to replace similar Canadian workers who are undergoing training in new and highly sophisticated equipment which will be coming into use in the near future. The workers laid off at the Northern Electric plant in Canada are members of different occupational groups and do not possess the required skills for the installation of central office equipment. Of the 3500 workers affected by production curtailment at this plant, some 2800 are, by agreement between the union and the company, in fact, not laid off, but are on paid holidays. The company expects to recall most of these workers in early January. The Canadian installers who the Americans are replacing are, in fact, not available for the reason I gave—they are undergoing training.