

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Alexander: Just a minute.

Mr. Crouse: How about a little order, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Alexander: All I would like to say is that I think the minister is very dishonest.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Alexander: He is less than honest.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Alexander: He is less than honest when it comes to interpreting my remarks to suit his own political expediency. My main point is that there should be a ceiling in this act—

Some hon. Members: Order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. It appears to the Chair the hon. member is simply making an argument now. He has made his speech and I do not think a question of privilege arises.

Mr. Baldwin: With great respect, Your Honour—

Some hon. Members: Order, order.

Mr. Baldwin: Would you ask the menagerie to be quiet? I simply say it is permitted under the rules, when an hon. member objects on the ground that another hon. member has attributed to him words he did not use, for the member who feels he has been misrepresented to rise and say so. That is all. It may simply be a misunderstanding. But this is the only opportunity available to my hon. friend from Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) to put the record right. He is entitled to make the statement he did.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): I do not disagree with the point made by the hon. member, but neither do I think hon. members should take advantage of questions of privilege to make a second speech. The hon. member for Verdun (Mr. Mackasey).

Mr. Mackasey: I regret it if my words were offensive to the hon. member, but I do know that an amendment was moved today—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but it is ten o'clock.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

[Mr. Alexander.]

VETERANS AFFAIRS—DISABILITY PENSIONS—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON STEPS TO EXPEDITE DECISIONS ON APPLICATIONS

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I have raised this question out of concern for the backlog of applications by Canadian war veterans and their rights under the amendments to the Canada Pension Act to reapply for disability pensions.

• (2200)

On January 9, as reported at page 88 of *Hansard*, I asked the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald), who today was referred to as the minister of agriculture, in view of the fact that the number of applications was increasing rather than decreasing, what steps he was taking to control the build-up in the backlog of applications, particularly in view of the fact, as I have said on many occasions, that the expected lifespan of Canadian war veterans is getting shorter and shorter as the years go by. The minister indicated in his reply to me that in a matter of days we would know what steps are being taken to rectify the situation and that pretty soon the trend would be reversed.

Subsequently, under questioning in the miscellaneous estimates committee the chairman of the pension commission said that while he realized these problems are of great concern across the country, he was rather pleased to say that the commission was making fairly good progress. He said that the backlog reached a peak of almost 9,600 cases at the end of September and that the commission were able to reduce that in January to just under 9,400. He said that the thing that was more important than having merely cut off 200 cases was the statistics themselves.

He went on to say that each month for the last seven months they found they had increased their production substantially. For each month of 1972, compared to each month in 1971, they increased their production. The incoming claims continued to go down. The curves on the graphs and the statistics showed a decided decrease, although there were individual months when they did go up. He said that in November and December of 1972 there was an increase but the over-all picture showed a decrease. Then he said that he was fairly confident that within the next two or three months we should be well on the way down.

I have every faith in the words of the chairman of the pension commission because I know he is as concerned as I am on behalf of the veterans that time is of the essence so far as the World War I and World War II veterans are concerned. I also know that the new minister, who certainly portrays an example by his contributions to the efforts made by veterans, feels that no stone should be left unturned either to increase the number of pension commissioners on an ad hoc basis, be it regionally or nationally, or to amend further the benefit of the doubt clause so that every benefit is directed toward the veteran who deserves, as of right, compensation for the sacrifice that he or she made to our nation in time of war.

We now have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to open up the whole question of the backlog of applications. Therefore I request the minister to deal with the matter. A number of days have past since he indicated to me in this