

*Adjournment Debate*

in October he would announce the rate that would apply to the years 1979, 1980 and 1981.

Last October 19, I asked the minister, first, whether the weighted interest rate, now on the increase, would be productive enough to pay full indexation and, second, what the rate of indexation applying to pensions would be for the next three years. The President of the Treasury Board answered that he hoped to be able to announce, in October as promised, the rates proposed for the next three years. Well, we are in November and no announcement had been made to date.

I admit that the problems exist and I do not like to push the issue but I would appreciate it tonight if the parliamentary secretary could give us the assurance that within a few days the minister will be making that announcement indicating firmly the rate of indexing of pensions for the next three years.

**Mr. Thomas H. Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board):** Mr. Speaker, once again I must congratulate the hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) for raising once again a problem affecting closely his constituents who include, of course, those who have retired from the Public Service of Canada.

As you know, this principle of maintaining the purchasing power of pensions to allow those who have retired to be able to continue to have access to the same food basket and the same services is one to which the government is and remains committed. However, would the government be also committed to the principle that the provisions dealing with pensions in the public service should be fair and equitable considering their incidence on Canadian taxpayers? The government does not believe that those two principles are incompatible. The March 9 statement by the President of the Treasury Board explained how the indexing could meet those two objectives. This is contained in Bill C-12 which the hon. member mentioned and which amends the statutory right to retirement pensions.

The hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier also asks how the pensions of those who have retired from the public service will be adjusted for the next three years. I hope he can understand that I am not in a position tonight to tell him that but I would like to explain that the estimates and calculations that will have to be done before a decision is made are very complicated and require a lot of time. I can reassure him that this is being considered and the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) hopes to be in a position to make a statement very soon on the pension adjustment which will be proposed for the years 1979, 1980 and 1981, and I assure the hon. member that the remarks made tonight will be brought to the attention of the President of the Treasury Board.

[English]

AIRPORTS—WINNIPEG INTERNATIONAL—FACILITIES TO ASSIST HANDICAPPED PERSONS

**Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I directed a question to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) in which I pointed out that in 1980 the World Congress on Rehabilitation will hold a meeting in Winnipeg, that 4,000 to 6,000 of the delegates attending the congress will be handicapped persons in wheelchairs, and that the organizers of the congress had stated that the national airport will be an embarrassment to the city of Winnipeg unless facilities are built to handle the large number of handicapped people expected to attend.

● (2212)

The minister's answers were less than satisfactory. They were very evasive. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) posed a similar question later in the question period and the minister stated the objective was to provide facilities. The answer is not satisfactory, Mr. Speaker.

Organizers of the congress have stated that Winnipeg International Airport will be an embarrassment to the city unless facilities are built to handle the large number of handicapped people who will attend the 1980 World Congress on Rehabilitation. Many will be disabled persons confined to wheelchairs.

I wrote to the Minister of Transport on September 19 regarding the problem faced by handicapped persons at Winnipeg International Airport customs area, on escalators and in other areas. We realize that the airport was designed in the 1950s and was not completed until the 1960s, when unfortunately we did not give much thought to handicapped persons and how to handle them. I hope the parliamentary secretary will give a firm commitment tonight that some temporary or permanent measures will be taken to facilitate the handling of handicapped people at the airport before 1980.

Mr. Ruffner, the director of communications for the United States president's commission for the handicapped was in Winnipeg to help local organizers plan the 1980 World Congress and he pointed to the very serious problems they had to face. Of the 6,000 or so delegates attending the congress there could be 500 or 600 in wheelchairs. The organizers are facing problems with hotels in the city as well.

The Department of Transport has assigned \$174 million for improvements to the Winnipeg airport but the program will not begin until 1982. I suggest to the parliamentary secretary that some of these funds should be allotted immediately to implement the needed improvements for the handling of handicapped persons at the airport.

I find it most disturbing to read articles in the Winnipeg newspapers about the airport, which is referred to as "bush league." An article in the Winnipeg *Tribune* quoted a reader, who often accompanied sick or handicapped people to and from the airport, as saying it is a disgrace to Canada. Mr. Speaker, we do not want it to be a disgrace.