

it concerns the letter sent to him by the ten members for central and eastern Montreal. No, I can assure you, Madam Speaker, I am not going to play petty politics like the Leader of the Opposition tried to do when he quoted only certain parts of our letter, thus glossing over our support for the government's policy. I should like to know what results can be expected following this request which stresses incentives for housing construction and job creation for young people. I should therefore like to ask the Prime Minister whether he will give this letter the attention it deserves?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Madam Speaker, in fact I referred to it earlier when I indicated that the Minister of Finance, in his statement on January 25 in Toronto, had pointed out that a number of concrete programs would have to be considered, and the letter referred to by the hon. member provides an example of those programs. I can assure him that the Minister of Finance and the government will consider the letter's recommendations with an open mind.

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[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

EX-SERVICEMEN'S EXPOSURE TO NUCLEAR RADIATION

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. In view of the fact that two independent studies which were released indicate that veterans who were involved in nuclear exercises are showing 500 per cent to 600 per cent increased incidence of cancer over the normal population, and as a result of Allan Solomon, former chairman of the pension commission, asking two years ago that a thousand members of the armed forces be told the amount of radiation to which they were exposed, recognizing that early detection of cancer might preserve their lives, would the minister indicate and make a commitment to the House that he is prepared to notify quickly those members of the Armed Forces who were exposed to radiation, of the amount of radiation to which they were exposed, and advise them that close consultation with their family physicians would be advisable?

Hon. W. Bennett Campbell (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Madam Speaker, in answer to the question by the hon. member, I would say that any individual can receive through his physician the radiation levels to which he was exposed during his activity, specifically in relation to the two occasions in the Chalk River cleanups and for those individuals who were involved in the Nevada testing. Their family physicians can request and receive the radiation levels as recorded by Atomic Energy of Canada in both occasions.

REQUEST FOR INDEPENDENT MEDICAL STUDY

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Madam Speaker, the chairman of the pension commission had asked the govern-

ment to move quickly in notifying these people. I ask the minister to make a commitment to notify those individuals in order that they can identify causes of degenerative disease.

Many of those records were destroyed. Many were inaccurate, and we even learned on the news today that they were falsified in the United States.

Many of the diseases are also of a degenerative nature, circulatory and others, not just cancer. Since we are dealing with a very unique group of individuals, would the minister make a commitment that he will support an independent and comprehensive study of those former members of the Armed Forces and their families?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. W. Bennett Campbell (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member is aware, a study which was commissioned by AECL is presently taking place on approximately 10,000 of their employees involved in activities such as the Chalk River clean-up and the Nevada testing. Approximately 300 of the Royal Canadian Air Force Anti-Nuclear Defence Group are also involved in that test group. I can also indicate to the hon. member that the study is progressing quite favourably and we anticipate the preliminary findings will be available sometime in early April.

I am more than happy to pursue with my colleagues, the Minister of Defence and the Minister of National Health and Welfare, the question as to what further steps should be taken in this matter.

CRITERIA APPLIED TO COMPENSATION APPLICATIONS

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg-Assiniboine): Madam Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. How can the minister refuse compensation to veterans such as Bjarnie Paulson and the members of the Association of Veterans of the RCAF Nuclear Defence Group when, at the same time, Lieutenant Colonel O.R. Browne, of Victoria, B.C. has been receiving a disability pension since 1971 for cancer which he contracted by handling radioactive cobalt during his service? Will the minister now agree to apply the same criteria to the many other veterans in their struggle for compensation for cancer they contracted as a result of atomic radiation, as were applied to Colonel Browne's case?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. W. Bennett Campbell (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Madam Speaker, I was not aware that different criteria have been applied by the Canadian Pension Commission in assessing all of those cases. As the hon. member can appreciate, the criteria being applied as to whether or not the present condition is associated with military service, and the rules, are applied consistently to all members who make application.