

Adjournment Debate

again. I had assumed that everything was in order. At this point I had other applicants with similar cases which they asked me to check into.

In January of this year the applicant suggested that something must be sadly wrong when one can fight a war in six years but an application cannot be processed in three years. I then contacted the special assistant to the minister.

We are constantly being told that we should not bother the commission because if we do, the individual application will go to the bottom of the pile. Surely the commission has enough intelligence to label these applications. Application No. 160 would come between 159 and 161. Surely they can pull out application No. 160 and see what the order is, and then give the applicant an idea as to when his application will be processed. However, I could not get a response from them.

Having gone through all the trouble of trying to help this applicant I think I have a legitimate grievance after three years, and perhaps the commission should wake up, if that is what is necessary.

What really concerns me is that the commission and the special assistant to the minister keep telling me, every time we make an inquiry, that we should not ask to have the application brought forward because if that is done it will lose its order of priority. Yet the minister gave me an assurance that it was taken care of on a priority basis. If I cannot ask a question concerning an application, how can I be of any use to my constituents?

I feel there is something wrong with the commission. Unfortunately, I believe they should be given a jolt. The applicant suggested to me that I should not bother them because he believes the commission is antagonistic toward him. Other applicants have told me the same thing. I do not want the commission to feel antagonistic to any applicant. These veterans have a right to apply to the commission and to receive some consideration. Certainly they deserve quicker service than they have been receiving from the commission. Any citizen of Canada is entitled to that much, and certainly veterans are entitled to that much more consideration than they have been receiving to date.

Mr. S. Victor Railton (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs): It is a pleasure to reply to the hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Korchinski) regarding the processing of pension applications.

At the present time it takes about a year to prepare the statement of case after an application for an entitlement board is received. The staff working in this area has been increased substantially so that the time lag is being rapidly reduced, and by the end of the year should be no more than four to five months.

The number of first applications awaiting decision was 3,182 as of the end of January, 1976. The number of claims considered at that level in 1975 was 9,239. In the same period there were 2,721 applications for entitlement boards and over 2,200 such claims were heard.

In so far as delays in adjudication are concerned, there are no cases at the first level of which the commission is aware which have been outstanding for anywhere near three years. At the end of January, 1976, there were only 28

[Mr. Korchinski.]

on record on which the decision had been outstanding for 15 months or more.

The commission has been steadily reducing the time lag between the date of application and the date of decision. The average length of time required to adjudicate a pension claim is now 6.8 months. A year ago it was close to 12 months. It is now 57 years since the end of World War I and 30 years since the end of World War II. Most of the claims now being made relate to conditions which did not manifest themselves for possibly 20 to 60 years after discharge. The commission has the responsibility under the Pension Act to find evidence and ways and means of relating today's disability to a time factor or possibly an episode which may have occurred 34 to 60 years ago, and these include heart conditions, deafness, arthritis and so on. These are afflictions of age, but the commission tries to separate the age aspect from the attributability aspect and relate the condition to the period of military service. In many cases this is an almost impossible task. The relatively simple claims such as gunshot wounds were considered long ago.

The purpose of the Canadian Pension Commission is to inquire and to try to arrive at the true state of affairs, and not to try to advance or defeat any particular point of view. The commission examines the facts and tries to determine whether a claim is valid. There is no adversary system. The commission does not oppose a claim, nor does anyone else. It examines the evidence and available information, and makes a decision.

I should just like to say that the hon. member for Mackenzie quoted a particular case, and I know the minister and myself would be glad to look into it again for him to see just what is the difficulty.

AIR TRANSPORT—POSSIBILITY OF RESTRICTIONS ON
UNILINGUAL PILOTS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about the question of language use in air traffic control. I do so not as a politician but as a professional pilot who has ten years' flying under my belt in international and national air spaces, and I am still actively flying. I take this opportunity to avail myself of a rather useless forum simply because I have something to put on the record. I say useless because there are only five of us in the Chamber tonight, and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) is not one of them.

A policy has been implemented in Quebec where two languages are being used in air traffic control. I do not speak tonight of anything other than safety, and I want to put on the record that safety in the air lanes in Canada over Quebec air space is being jeopardized for the sake of political expediency. I forecast that there will be a disaster. It will be a fatal disaster, of minor or major proportions, and the minister and the government will be entirely to blame.

In the seven minutes I have there is no way I can advance all the arguments I have to propose with respect to the jeopardizing of safety, but I want those who are here tonight, and perhaps those who might read these remarks, to imagine themselves on the flight deck of an Air Canada flight with the weather being 3,000 feet overcast, with