

Pensions

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I do not think I have to speak very long in respect of this very important matter. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has expressed the sentiments I would like to express and that my party endorses. I think it is expected of us as parliamentarians to be responsible. Surely we can at least ask the press, when they are reporting, to be responsible likewise. The point was raised yesterday in respect of what amounts to be a very sensitive issue which deals with the rights of pensioners and those involved with the public purse. It was my understanding that the minister understood this particular problem and made a very frank and open statement to the effect there will be indexing, but in the future we will have to make sure that it is actuarially sound. This is the point which was made, but for the press to go further than that and exaggerate, I can only suggest that is wrong, with the hope that they will take due note of the comments we have made regarding this as well as other matters which are continually being reported from this House.

I think the public expects honesty, and gentlemanly and womanly comment in respect of reporting. They are looking for the truth, and if we have to be responsible, and I do not plead with the press, I would ask that they take due notice of what has happened at this particular time on this point of order and be responsible as well.

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, may I join with the representations made by other hon. members, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras), and the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander).

● (1212)

I was particularly shocked when a local report carried by the CBC Ottawa station CBOT last night glaringly misrepresented the facts, which had the effect of leading my constituents in Ottawa West to believe there would be no indexing of pensions in the next two or three years. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The distortion was the most glaring distortion in my period of service in parliament, and I can only say that it has brought a flood of calls to my constituency office, to my own office here, and to my home, based on a total misrepresentation of the statement of the President of the Treasury Board during the debate which took place in the House. I do not know what else I can say. I just hope that there is some means by which this serious distortion of events can be corrected.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. members who have contributed to this point have certainly expressed their views very clearly. They are on the record. Obviously if the same members of the media who were paying attention of some sort yesterday are paying attention today, they can hardly help but get the message. There is no formal action the Chair can take, but I do not see that any would be required in order to send the message as forcibly and clearly such a short distance away.

[Mr. Andras.]

MR. LeBLANC (WESTMORLAND-KENT)—NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE—RECEPTION FOR MUMMERS TROUPE OF ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am not trying to correct a story in the media but to prevent one. Earlier today, in a motion under Standing Order 43, the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) indicated that the National Arts Centre had refused to serve flippers, which I am looking forward to tasting for the first time. This story came to me from the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) yesterday afternoon. I checked with the National Arts Centre authorities and I understand there was some misunderstanding. They thought they were providing the food. Anyway, there is no difficulty now, and the director of the NAC will be very happy to accommodate the mummets and their guests.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-424, to amend the Official Secrets Act.

Some hon. Members: Explain.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, this is a reincarnation, with some changes, of a bill I introduced in the last session attempting to lend respectability to the Official Secrets Act and proceedings taken under it. It provides simply for a definition of national security as being matters clearly contrary to the public interest. It restricts the operations of the act to cases of espionage, security, and subversion, and eliminates all the miscellaneous domestic matters and provides an affirmative defence in certain circumstances for actions taken bona fide and in the genuine public interest. These will be constituted as defences under the provisions of the legislation.

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.

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FARM CREDIT ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

Hon. Len Marchand (for the Minister of Agriculture) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-29, to amend the Farm Credit Act.

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.