

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

tee if he would do what he could to get the necessary reference so that the committee could study the matter and he, too, said yes.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have had the right answers all down the line; the only trouble is that time is going by. There is now talk of trying to recess this session on June 30 to an unknown date, with some uncertainty as to whether we will come back on that date, and this raises the question of whether we should not do our best to get action on this matter soon.

A letter has just come to all of us from Mr. J. C. Lundberg, chairman of the National Council of Veterans Associations in Canada, enclosing a copy of the submission of that association to the minister on the basic rate of the disability pension. The letter expressed the hope that this matter might be referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs for immediate consideration, and it also expressed the hope that this would result in a recommendation being made to the House of Commons during the present session.

If there is a recess on June 30 I know that it is going to be difficult to get this matter dealt with by then, but an attempt could and ought to be made. The suggestion that I make tonight, Mr. Speaker, is that if necessary serious consideration be given to holding meetings of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs during the recess. I am not suggesting that those meetings have to be held in the heat of summer or at some awkward time, but I think the members of that committee would be willing to meet at an appropriate time to deal with this matter so that a recommendation could be made while this session is still in existence and, hopefully, while this Parliament is still alive. I am sure the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs agrees that it would be most unfortunate if the good will that has been built up and the expertise that the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has attained were lost and we had to start all over again.

In this spirit of amity that exists between us, I hope the parliamentary secretary will make it clear tonight that the assurances of the minister are being kept alive and that something will be done on this as soon as possible, and that if there is no way to get a study of this matter by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs before June 30, arrangements will be made for that committee to meet during the recess. Surely we can do no less.

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the minister appreciates the very complimentary remarks which the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) made about him. I know that all members of the House share the general views that he expressed in regard to the legislation recently put before this place and now being considered concerning improvements in veterans pensions. As the hon. member pointed out, the statement of the minister was abundantly clear. The escalation of pensions did not deal with the problem of the basic rate of pension. The minister indicated that the government was reviewing this matter.

At the present time, Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has before it a reference by this

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

House concerning prisoners of war, and it has had testimony presented to it by associations representing former prisoners of war. Until the committee has discharged the terms of the present reference I do not believe it is the intention of the government to place before it any other reference.

However, the minister has indicated his basic sympathy with the objectives expressed by the hon. member. He has indicated that he has an open mind concerning reference of the basic rate of pension. At this stage I think that is all I can say on the matter. I do know that the government is considering it.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS—DENMARK—DENIAL THAT DANISH FISHING CAUSE OF DEPLETION OF ATLANTIC SALMON STOCKS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, on May 4 I asked the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) if he shared the view of the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Davis) regarding that gentleman's suggested boycott of Danish goods. The minister replied that his colleague had been expressing a personal view. Although subsequent events and further failures of Canadian diplomacy in fisheries matters may have obscured this episode, it still merits attention.

Apart from the serious issue of the depredation upon our fisheries, there are two interesting aspects: one concerns the fundamental principle of cabinet solidarity and the other is the question of the separation of the public and private personality of ministers of the Crown. On May 2 the Minister of Fisheries was widely quoted as suggesting that a boycott on Danish goods by Canadian consumers was probably a good idea. He said:

Such action could be very effective.

Interestingly enough, the minister noted that there could be no official boycott of Danish goods because such action would be in violation of GATT. He went on to recommend that the people of Canada should do what the government would not do. However, the brave boycott of May 3 became something less than a major theme as days went by. It became a personal opinion.

Many years ago the premier of Ontario, Sir James Whitney, said that any public man who has no public view on public issues is a public fool. Being less abrasive than Sir James, I would avoid such polemics, but after a good many years in the study and practice of politics I am puzzled when a public official, as a minister surely is, speaks of a public matter and still remains a private person.

A minister has, of course, a private life and a private capacity. He does not speak *ex cathedra* at the breakfast table or at private gatherings. However, it is a bit subtle to suggest that some press conference dicta are private utterances and others public proclamations. One is inclined to believe that the minister's call for a boycott did not win the endorsement of his colleagues and his chief-tain, the Prime Minister. Indeed, who knows, he may have felt the condemnation of someone from on high. If that is the case, if he was overruled as his colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro), was some