

Oral Questions

recommended so often by various commissions and by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs?

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): This question, also, is under consideration by the department. I should inform the House that widows of veterans who are entitled to pensions and who are in receipt of a 48 per cent pension, or a lesser amount, are entitled to pension should death occur from the effect of service. Furthermore, widows of veterans whose husbands were not in receipt of disability pension can also receive assistance.

ANNUAL REPORT OF DEPARTMENT—MEMBERS' STUDY OF LEGISLATION

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): In view of the fact that two motions under Standing Order 43 on the subject have received unanimous consent, and since the estimates are due to be considered soon, would the minister discuss with the House leader the possibility of bringing forward the annual report as soon as possible, so we could discuss the many inequities which exist in the Pension Act and in the veterans' charter?

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): I do not see any difficulty at all about that. The reason it has not been brought to the attention of the House leader so far is that some of the high executives in the veterans' organizations are out of the country. They have requested—and I have so informed members of the other parties who are especially interested—that consideration of this matter be delayed until such time as they are available to appear before the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

RELOCATION OF VETERANS' HOSPITALS—JOB SECURITY OF STAFFS

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary arises from the transfer of two veterans' hospitals—Westminster, in London, and Camp Hill, in Halifax—which underlines the concern which has been expressed about job security for hospital staffs. Since announcements are being made by regional officials involving staff amalgamation and reduction, which is of concern to veterans employed on the staff of Veterans Affairs, would the minister clarify, for the benefit of the staff across the country, previous assurances that job security would be maintained in accordance with the commitment made in 1973 when agreement was reached to hand over these hospitals?

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, this has not presented any problem for us in the past and we do not expect it will in the future. There is provision in our agreement with the provinces that job security will be maintained. As far as the Westminster hospital is concerned, every employee of the federal department had an option to transfer to the provincial administration. Hon. members will recognize that there are positions under the provincial government which do not have their counterparts under the federal administration. The total number involved there is 45,

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

19 of whom are unemployed. The situation of several others will not be known until the end of 1978, but we have every reason to believe they will be employed at a later date in some other capacity under the federal government.

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ANTI-DUMPING TRIBUNAL

APPOINTMENT OF NEW CHAIRMAN

Mrs. Jean E. Pigott (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. It has been widely reported in the press that the outgoing chairman of the Anti-Dumping Tribunal, Mr. Guy D'Avignon, recommended that the vice-chairman, Dr. Marguerite Ritchie, succeed him as chairman of the tribunal. Can the hon. gentleman confirm that Mr. D'Avignon did make such a recommendation?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I do not have any information bearing on that point, so I am not able to comment.

Mrs. Pigott: Since the government has shown its confidence in Mr. D'Avignon by appointing him to chair the newly created Special Committee on Merit in the Public Service, would the Acting Prime Minister explain why the government failed to follow his recommendation of the appointment of a woman with such an outstanding record as Dr. Ritchie? Does the government have any intention of accepting any further recommendations by Mr. D'Avignon with regard to ending discrimination against women in the public service?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, without commenting on whether or not Mr. D'Avignon made any such recommendation, may I say, first of all, that I agree with the hon. member that Miss Ritchie has had a distinguished career in the public service and has a well established reputation as a lawyer. In this particular case, because of the tribunal's requirements in relation to international trading concerns it was felt that the present appointee would be best qualified. There is no tradition in the public service, to my knowledge, that the vice-chairman automatically proceeds to the post of chairman.

An hon. Member: That goes for deputy prime ministers, too.

Mr. MacEachen: I believe that recently we appointed Miss MacDougall chairman of the Tariff Board when the vice chairman, in the context of this discussion, might have expected to be promoted. I want to assure the hon. lady that there was no element of discrimination whatsoever. The appointment was based on what the government felt was the job required at the time. We shall continue our efforts to increase the number of appointments made from among the competent women who serve in the public service.