

be a real reason for postponing indefinitely the implementation of such a program.

● (1440)

[English]

POSSIBILITY OF CHANGE IN COST-SHARING FORMULA FOR PENSIONS FOR BLIND AND DISABLED

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the fact that a guaranteed income is not foreseen in the near future, and in view of the fact that those who are disabled through no fault of their own—the blind and the disadvantaged—are suffering as a result of inflation, has any representation been made by the provinces about increasing the cost-sharing formula, particularly for the province of Newfoundland, to allow these people to be able to cope with the high cost of living which exists?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): No, Mr. Speaker.

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[English]

COMMUNICATIONS

REQUEST FOR IMPROVEMENT IN TELEPHONE SYSTEM—
GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Communications, born of some frustration, not with the minister but with the telephone system. I understand from usual channels that the Liberal caucus decided on the weekend that improved communications would assist the faltering image of the government. Would the minister agree that unless the communications system is improved nothing can be done to help the image of the government, and will something be done to improve what must be one of the worst telephone systems in western civilization?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Jeanne Sauvé (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I think what is going on in British Columbia this week might do much to improve the image of the government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Sauvé: But I am sure the hon. member will appreciate that that has nothing to do with the telephone system. To answer his question, rate increases like the ones which have recently been allowed are related to development and expansion of telephone services. In many cases that would mean an improvement of the service. However, under the new legislation providing for the regulating of the telephone system under an enlarged CRTC there will be more opportunity to take into account social factors and also to have an input as to the possible concern the hon. member has about coverage and quality of service.

Oral Questions

Mr. Fairweather: Is it not somewhat anomalous that while we congratulate ourselves for having one of the most wonderful telecommunication satellites in space, here on earth one cannot get the government switchboard, in or out?

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

DELAY IN PROCESSING PENSION APPLICATIONS—
GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. I should like to ask the minister what is happening within the Canadian Pension Commission. Veterans who submitted their applications as long ago as three years have not had their applications processed. What steps does the minister intend to take to speed up these applications?

Will he reorganize the commission and if necessary add more members, or, as has been so brutally suggested because of the annoyance, perhaps withhold pay cheques to see if they extend their hands and determine if rigor mortis has set in?

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member knows of any cases which have lasted over three years—because I do not think we have any—he should bring them to my attention. To answer in respect of the processing, previously there were 10,000 applications, now it is in the vicinity of 4,000 and the commission is working quite well. I would be very glad to take notice of any particular cases the hon. member has in mind. Sometimes there are applicants for pensions who do not qualify, and to determine what their qualifications are is quite a process, and takes much time. It would take a very detailed answer to give the many reasons for this, but I would be very interested in obtaining information about the cases to which the hon. member makes reference.

Mr. Korchinski: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

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ANTI-INFLATION BOARD

REASON FOR REDUCING AMOUNT OF WAGE INCREASE FOR
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY WORKERS

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. In view of statements made by the minister during a debate in the House and in the committee during the discussions on the anti-inflation bill that people earning less than \$3.50 per hour would be permitted to get increases of more than the 10 per cent maximum permitted by the guidelines, would the minister explain why the University of Toronto library workers, for many of whom the 20 per cent increase would still leave them earning less than the \$3.50 an hour, had their agreements scaled down by the Anti-Inflation Board?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have referred a question of that nature to the