

Social Insurance Card

Canada Pension Plan. Some Provincial Governments have expressed an interest in the possible use of the same numbers and cards in connection with other programs. This clearly would be a considerable convenience to the public. It means, however, that the card should be one suitable for use in connection with programs under the authority of Provincial as well as Federal legislation. It also makes the durability of the card even more important. The Government therefore intends to introduce a plastic card.

Second, in order to provide a national symbol equally appropriate for programs under either Federal or Provincial jurisdiction, the card has been redesigned with a maple leaf superimposed by the word "Canada" in place of the coat of arms which is a distinctively Federal symbol and therefore not the most suitable for Provincial use. The card in this new form will be suitable for many possible uses besides the most urgent one which, of course, is for both Federal and Provincial pension plans.

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, this is a rather interesting disclosure finally forced out of the Minister of Labour by questions on orders of the day by the Leader of the Opposition over the last week. He has now given us a very weak excuse for removing from the social security card the coat of arms—

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Churchill: —which of all symbols is surely the most distinctive of the national unity of this country. For the Minister to tell us shamefacedly that this is not suitable because of Provincial attitudes will not go down with the public at all. I think it is a disgrace that this Government should continue its whittling away of our history and traditions. We now see a continuation of their program of destruction of our history and traditions. The removal of the coat of arms from the social security card is the first step, I suppose, in the removal of the coat of arms from all other places where it is displayed in Canada. Will the next step be the removal of the coat of arms from this building? This is a disgraceful announcement by the Minister of Labour.

[Later:]

Hon. Michael Starr (Ontario): I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Labour. It is related to the announcement made this morning regarding social security cards. Can the Minister tell us which provinces requested

[Mr. MacEachen.]

the use of these federal security cards for provincial programs, and what programs those provinces have in mind?

Hon. A. J. MacEachen (Minister of Labour): The two Provinces which occur to me immediately in this connection are the Provinces of Quebec and Saskatchewan.

Mr. Starr: Can the Minister tell us what programs they have in mind for the use of these cards?

Mr. MacEachen: In Quebec, of course, the provincial pension plan is a program which will need a numbering system. The hon. Member can appreciate the confusion which would arise if two numbering systems were used by the same people for various programs. This is why we have produced a card which can be used with a single numbering system for both Federal and Provincial purposes, now and in the future.

Mr. Starr: What is the program in the other province?

Mr. MacEachen: I cannot tell the hon. gentleman what the program is, but I understand from the officials that the province of Saskatchewan has expressed an interest in using the card system, possibly for the medical insurance plan.

Mr. Jack McIntosh (Swift Current-Maple Creek): In view of the fact that the Minister's statement on these social security cards this morning is related to question No. 650 in my name on the order paper, I wonder whether the hon. gentleman could complete his answer and tell us whether the machinery and plates for these cards were imported from the United States and, if so, at what cost to the public.

Mr. MacEachen: In order to process these new plastic cards, which are very attractive in design, it is necessary to use additional machinery. I will answer the question as to the source of the machinery and the cost when the question is called.

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington South): Is the removal of the Canadian coat of arms from these social security cards to be the policy of this Government in the printing of future documents?

Mr. MacEachen: No. The reason for the change has been explained. It certainly does not imply any diminution in our respect for the Canadian coat of arms.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.