

Canada Pension Plan

ince across Canada. Whether or not these plans can be reconciled is one thing, but just recently the province of Alberta has undertaken an extension of this type of administration to cover other public service pension schemes involving such people as municipal employees, hospital employees and a number of other categories, all falling within the ambit of what can be called public service. If there is no provision in the Canada pension plan for reconciling these public service pension plans so that the administration can be carried out by the same organization, and if the provinces are going to be required to continue to operate and administer pension plans covering quite a large number of people, when you take into account the civil servants and all other public service employees, then there is some opinion to the effect that, if they are going to have to be in the pension administration business, in any event they might as well set up their own plan and expand it to include all those people who would normally come under the Canada pension plan.

I do not think this is a problem that cannot be solved. I do not think it is an insurmountable difficulty; but in spite of the discourse of the minister this afternoon there has been complete silence up to this hour with regard to what the federal government and the Department of National Health and Welfare are willing to do to take into account these very serious matters. So I think that, without getting into the 125 sections of the bill, there should be some kind of explanation from the minister with regard to this matter.

There is another question I should like to ask the minister, since she is apparently so reluctant to tell us how many provinces have indicated they are willing to participate in the plan. Have some of the provinces asked for explanations along the lines I have been discussing but which have not been given by the minister? In other words, have queries come forward from the province of Ontario and the province of Alberta that have not been satisfactorily answered by the minister and her officials? Are the provinces asking questions that the minister and her officials are unable to answer? It seems to me one can reach no other conclusion but that the provinces are asking for explanations and details with regard to the application of this plan which the department is apparently not prepared to give, at least at this stage. I think we have reached the point in processing this bill through the House of Commons where we deserve to be given the answers now.

We are pleased to hear that the administration of the plan may not be as expensive as

it might have been if it had involved the setting up of a completely new department of pensions. From the minister's statement today we understand that collections under the pension plan will probably be made through the Department of National Revenue and that payments or disbursements will probably be made through the Department of National Health and Welfare by utilizing the same channels now being used for the distribution of old age security cheques, family allowances, youth allowances and so on. It seems to me there is a great deal of machinery set up in both of these departments, on the one side for collections and on the other side for disbursements, that could be satisfactorily used at substantially less cost than would be involved in setting up a completely new and separate collection and payment agency.

I might also say we are very interested in the amount that it is anticipated will be built up in the fund, particularly in the first ten years of the plan. We would like to know what the anticipated amount of money will be that will be available to the provinces for investment and other purposes. We are told that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gordon) and the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Benson) will be making contributions to this debate later. Perhaps they intend to deal with this matter, as well as giving us an outline of the anticipated effect on the whole economy. I hope there will be considerably more explanation as to what is going to be done with this fund. There has been speculation in the newspapers from time to time by a variety of people that a fund of several billion dollars will be built up in the initial stages of the plan, but so far I do not believe we have had any straightforward statement by any minister in the government as to what the anticipated size of the fund will be and how much will be available to the various provinces for investment purposes.

Generally speaking we in this party are prepared to have the bill referred now to the special joint committee. We think that is the place where we can go into some of the additional details we have been requesting. Therefore we are satisfied to let the bill go now to the committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, we often have pieces of legislation which, though good in themselves, are somewhat less so in their application.

The people in charge have managed to come out with a rather thick volume for this