

*Pension Legislation Delayed*

the promise of action, confirmation of that promise, assurances that if we would just wait we would see the bill and get going. Finally, on July 18, the motion respecting the resolution preceding the bill to bring in the plan was moved by the Minister of National Health and Welfare. As hon. members all know, we had that one day's debate, and that is all the opportunity we have had for discussion of the matter in this house.

I would remind hon. members opposite that during the debate of July 18 the hon. lady said some interesting and significant things. She said the plan had been worked out in considerable detail, and I agree with her. She said that, provided the house could move with reasonable expedition in passing this legislation, it would be possible for contributions to the new plan to commence in October, 1964, and for certain of the benefits under the plan to begin in January, 1966. There were two main benefits which were to start in January, 1966. The first was to be payments under the pension plan itself of say, \$10 a month, to people who had contributed for a couple of years and who had reached the age of 70. The other benefit would be the right of people to take a pension at an earlier age, such as 65 or any age between 65 and 70.

The point I wish to make is that the Minister of National Health and Welfare made it clear that, in order to get the plan going so that contributions could be made in October of 1964 and so that people could begin deriving benefits by January, 1966, the legislation had to be put through parliament as expeditiously as possible. Yet here we are at the end of October, having waited since July 18, and this house has not been given an opportunity to proceed further with that legislation.

All of us know what has happened in the meantime—the furore which has been raised about the plan, notably by the insurance companies and other private interests who think that pension plans of this sort should not be handled by the government. We know there have also been complaints by some of the provinces which resulted in this question being discussed at the federal-provincial conference held while the house was in summer recess. I recognize that, as a result of what took place at that conference, certain decisions were made and certain changes were made. It was decided at that time, I think partly because of what happened at the conference but partly because of protests which came from opposition parties and from people throughout the length and breadth of the country, to separate the \$10 increase in old age security benefits from the Canada pension plan and to put it into effect forthwith. That was a good decision. That increase

was brought in on September 30, or at least it was first moved on that date, and now it is part of the law of the land. But one of the by-products of this change has been that nothing further has been done to go ahead with the Canada pension plan itself.

The minister may say there was an undertaking to consult with the provinces and that there is another federal-provincial conference coming up in the month of November to discuss this plan and other related matters. But surely we have the right to know the intention of the federal government with respect to this legislation, which is still on our order paper and concerning which nothing has been done since July 18. Attempts which have been made since we resumed on September 30 to extract from the Minister of National Health and Welfare or from the Prime Minister any kind of assurance that the measure will be proceeded with at this session have been utterly unsuccessful. This is so, despite the fact that the hon. lady herself pleaded, on July 18, for expedition so that the benefits of the plan could reach our people at the earliest possible date. On September 30, when the Minister of National Health and Welfare introduced a resolution providing for the \$10 increase in old age security payments she said this, as reported in *Hansard* at page 3038:

This present measure is a solid step in the right direction but the government sincerely hopes that the Canada pension plan will be introduced before too long to provide adequately for the retirement of our older people.

During the election campaign there was no doubt about it. It would be done. According to the speech from the throne, it would be done. According to the speech made by the Prime Minister in the debate on the address, it would be done. Throughout May and June the minister told us to possess our souls in patience, because it would be done. But on September 30 the hon. lady merely hopes it will be introduced before too long.

By October 15 I was finding it difficult to possess my soul in patience much longer. So I asked the Prime Minister whether he could give us an assurance that the plan would be proceeded with during the present session. In reply, as is reported on page 3579 of *Hansard* for October 15, the right hon. gentleman said:

We intend to proceed with legislation in this matter as soon as possible.

The exchange continued:

Mr. Knowles: Would it be possible for the Prime Minister to say whether that "as soon as possible" means this session?

Mr. Pearson: It depends among other things on the hon. gentleman and all hon. members of the house and how long we take over the legislation we are now considering.