

tributory plan where employers and employees have much larger compulsory CPP deductions from their paycheques. I suppose we would have to at least double present premiums. If the actual situation did not protect workers at all, and if so much was missing from the pot, the premium should be at least doubled, which would raise billions of dollars and create a fund to be reinvested, etc. At this point in time all these questions are open because we do not know what the private sector can do and is committed to doing.

The fourth avenue is a mix, and I call it the British model. It would be made up of an enlarged CPP, imposed on everyone. However, where a so-called good private plan existed, that employer would receive a certificate and would not be subject to compulsory CPP contributions. That would be the best of both worlds, because it would respect the private sector where a plan existed, while rapidly providing benefits to employees who do not have a plan.

● (1620)

The federal government is not alone in that reform because no government in Canada has the monopoly on jurisdiction over pensions. The federal government can cover about 10 per cent of the labour force and each provincial government shares a portion of the remaining 90 per cent. It is not fair to say that the provinces cover 90 per cent; that is not the way it is. Each province covers a portion of employers in one geographic zone. An example is the fact that the B.C. government can rule on B.C. employers, but B.C. employers in the pulp and paper industry can have affiliates in Quebec where a different province has jurisdiction. That is why the co-operation of all players in this reform is absolutely essential.

I think I have given the five objectives of the conference and I have attempted to review rapidly the four avenues of action that are open to us.

Following the conference we will assess the results and then discuss and finalize the federal position. We will then have numerous consultations and negotiations with the provinces. They will also have to formulate their own stand on the action they would like to see taken toward the reform of private pension plans in Canada.

I think it is fair to offer the so-called private sector an opportunity to remain in what I call a good business; after all, the private pension industry is worth some \$45 billion. If it is weak because of the lack of proper coverage, indexing, portability, or survivors' benefits, we are giving it an opportunity to update what it offers people. We are telling the private sector to grab this opportunity, to offer pension plans to small employers who do not quite know how to go about offering one. We want the industry to give us innovative ideas about how a pool could be established that would protect employers who go bankrupt and whose employees, therefore, run the risk of losing their pension altogether. This is a business opportunity and the industry should grab it and offer us something.

I do not quite know when my time finishes, Mr. Speaker, but I should like to touch on the fact that we cannot conclude that the private sector is not ready to make changes. It has learned from history and from government that it was not giving the people as much as it should in terms of social

benefits. The industry may have lost opportunities but I think it has learned a great deal.

Something that I have observed and which is quite positive is the regrouping of forces. In Canada we have often talked about the private sector, but the private sector does not exist in pension matters. There are many different players who are not regrouped as in Europe, where there is one single body of employers called "le patronat". We do not have that in Canada. However, they have started regrouping themselves in a very positive way, and there are now spokespeople for the so-called private pension sector. Many players in the private sector have made surveys and have set up task forces of their own. They have started moving toward pension reform.

As minister in charge of the Department of National Health and Welfare, in a way I am the voice of pensioners in cabinet, so I think it is fair for me to say that the government will assess the results of the conference. I hope these results will be published right away, after the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) and I have co-chaired the meetings. We will be asking two questions. First, are the reforms proposed by the private sector enough and how do they meet our five objectives or, more precisely, the first four objectives in particular? The second question in assessing any of the avenues open to us is, will benefits be provided quickly enough? These are the questions that I will be asking. Other ministers, because of their responsibilities, will have to ask different questions, such as whether the economy can afford it and so on.

I think it is fair to repeat what I have often said in the country in discussions with groups about the reform of pensions—that these will be my criteria for an analysis of the results, leading to the choice of one avenue instead of several.

I will finish by dealing with a question that has often been put to me and which I am sure will be asked again next week at the conference. People ask how it is that we are in such a bad situation in Canada. I must say again that Canada and Sweden have the best public pensions in the world but, unfortunately, Canada and the United States have the worst private pensions in the world. It is important for members to act. We must now address the question of retirement income coming from one's employer—in other words, the company pension.

I do not know the exact explanation for this, Mr. Speaker, but I am told that in Europe, because of the war, the unions attached top priority, in their dealings with employers and in their collective bargaining, to the building of pension plans. In Canada, on the other hand, the unions have historically done more to bring about indexation of benefits and COLA clauses than to build private pension plans. This is not a criticism. I just want to try to explain why it is that all Canadians—and keep that image in mind, because that is why we are having a conference—in whatever revenue group they find themselves, in the five last years of their active life, the best years, the day they retire have their income cut in half.

That is the challenge that we want to address. It is not a fight against poverty that I am proposing; it is a fight for better retirement income for the vast majority of Canadians. I think that is quite a challenge. It is time for action. I want to