

Canada Pension Plan

he chooses deliberately to mislead. This is a national scheme in concept—

Mr. Monteith: Nonsense.

Miss LaMarsh:—and there has been worked out, for application to Canadians from coast to coast, a scheme which will have universal application. In so far as the Canadian constitution permits the federal government to go, it has gone. The hon. member quoted something from one of his favourite spokesmen, the premier of Ontario, to the effect that they might have at any time exercised their own constitutional position to bring in their own legislation. The legislation is so drawn in this clause that it is not possible at whim for a province to go outside the plan. The clause is so drawn that there are conditions upon which a premier and government of a province may take its people from out of the Canada pension plan and, as has been stated, that is by way of comparable provincial legislation giving comparable benefits, covering a comparable number of people, giving comparable amounts and types of pension, and presumably with a comparable rate in so far as contributions are concerned.

Mr. Monteith: Presumably.

Miss LaMarsh: It was mentioned that this plan was not in itself universal. I can hardly believe that the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich, or those with whom he is now sitting, could possibly intend the federal government to operate within a jurisdiction wider than the constitution permits. I think that partisanship aside, in all fairness they will have to admit to the committee and the house that the legislation goes as far as the constitutional position warrants.

It is clear that as of this date, aside from the province of Quebec, which as far back as August of 1963 passed a resolution in its legislature that it intended to bring in its own legislation, and which has since that time amended its own resolution with a very detailed plan that has certainly comparable or perhaps identical provisions, no other province has indicated privately or publicly that it intends to pass its own legislation. I should like to say to the committee, Mr. Chairman, that if indeed there is any question of this being a national plan, had the amendment put forward this afternoon by spokesmen for the Conservative party been passed, there is one thing that would have been certain, and that is that there could have been no national plan.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Miss LaMarsh: Indeed, the legislature of Quebec—

Mr. Monteith: Who is getting political now?

Miss LaMarsh:—voted to pass its own legislation. Had the legislative changes as proposed by the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka this afternoon been adopted by this chamber, there is no suggestion in the world that those amendments, so drastic a change as they were, would have in any way been comparable with the legislation proposed in the Quebec legislation.

It was also mentioned by the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich, as part of the quotation from the speech of the premier of Ontario, that the premier of Ontario could have had control over his own funds. Indeed, Mr. Chairman, if the amendment had passed this afternoon, by the admission of the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, this would have been meaningless language because there would have been no funds over which to take control.

I have no objection at all to hon. members standing up, particularly those who have been on the committee, and attempting to make clear a very complex piece of legislation. But I object very strenuously to an attempt to mislead the committee, as certain members of the press have already widely, unhappily, misled the public at large.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Chairman, I do not think we can let these remarks of the minister go without some comment. I think they are rather insulting remarks—

An hon. Member: As usual.

Mr. Churchill:—saying that members of the committee of the whole house who have spoken on this bill did not know what they were talking about, and including charges that attempts are being made to mislead the committee.

An hon. Member: And the press.

Mr. Churchill: The hon. minister should be somewhat less arrogant in attempting to get a bill through the House of Commons, particularly a minister who was excluded from some of the preliminary work on two or three of the revisions of this bill—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Churchill:—and who was shunted to one side and her position taken over by the Prime Minister, and then by an adviser on the Prime Minister's staff. I am not sure what contribution she made to the joint committee that sat to consider this bill.