

*Canada Pension Plan*

but before we call it one o'clock I should like to bring to the attention of the committee that the Chair has been assuming that we are operating under the time allocation order specified in provisional standing order 61A, which limits speeches to 20 minutes. I understand that although my authority to call time was questioned yesterday, the minister has just about reached the end of her allocation of time.

I may say, before the parliamentary secretary joins the argument, that there is a slight difficulty in connection with standing order 61A, in which there is reference to a resolution preceding a bill. In this instance the resolution is not preceding a bill because we have the bill before us. On the other hand, I believe we are proceeding with part IV of the bill, and assume the committee will want to interpret the revised standing order in this light. With this in mind, I think I would have to advise the minister she has not more than 30 seconds remaining.

**Mr. Knowles:** Mr. Chairman, since you have been telling the committee that we should know about all this special rule, should you not also point out there is a total time allotted of five hours?

**The Chairman:** The Chair was hoping it would not have to reach that stage.

**Mr. Knowles:** So did some of us, before the minister spoke.

**Mr. Herridge:** I am sure the committee will give unanimous consent to the minister concluding her speech. It is most interesting.

**The Chairman:** We will call it one o'clock after the minister completes her remarks.

**Miss LaMarsh:** I thank the members of the committee for their courtesy. As I was saying, the only people who are excluded on the grounds of their small earnings are those for whom this resolution is especially important. They are people whose earnings are appreciably less than the \$75 a month pension which it is proposed to make available for everyone at age 65. No one, certainly not the government, is going to suggest that this will relieve all poverty among retired people. Of course it will not. It cannot, especially during the transition period. However, it will provide for the Canadian people as a whole a sound pension plan. Even within the next few years it will appreciably reduce the incidence of poverty.

[The Chairman.]

All that, I agree, is not enough. But the way to deal with the remaining problem of poverty is not, I suggest, to load on to the pension plan an additional universal benefit. The effect of the measure proposed in this resolution is that by 1970 some 1,600,000 people will be drawing old age security. In that year an additional universal benefit of \$25 per month would cost about half a billion dollars. That would be a formidable addition to what is proposed for pensions in this resolution and in Bill No. C-136. The additional good it would do has to be weighed against all that we need in Canada for education, for health, for the relief of poverty below age 65, for social capital of many kinds.

Most of us are familiar with the argument that we have to look at priorities. Are we, then, to put all our social eggs in one basket? What about the preschoolers? What about students up to and including university? What about the young married couples, and what about the great central group of income producers in our society? Are we to concentrate most of our new resources on the retired at the expense of other groups in our society?

We have, as a people, difficult and important choices to make, and we cannot do all we would like to do in any one field. We have to move as fast as we can, but we cannot achieve it by trying to do everything at once. If we consider the sums which were spent by this parliament in increasing old age security by \$10 a little over a year ago and the sum which will be required when all individuals at 65 are entitled to a flat rate of \$75 per month, we are adding \$390 million annually to the expenditures of this country.

The choice would be very difficult indeed if a higher universal benefit were the only way to help the most needy. However, that is not so, and it is not the government's intention. For many months we have been preparing a greatly revised assistance program. We have had preliminary discussions with the provinces, and next month we will be meeting with the provincial ministers of welfare to discuss a new assistance program. It is through a program of that kind that we can adequately and equitably meet the needs of the people who are already retired and who, for other reasons, do not benefit from the new pension plan. This will be one of the next steps forward which this government is preparing to take.