

Canada Pension Plan

Mr. Peters: The hon. member has thanked me for the compliment. I should indicate that it was a compliment. I think both speeches have enlightened the members of this house and have clarified what was a confusing situation.

Mr. Speaker, I think the reputation which parliament has established during this session, and the attitude of the government in particular toward the business of this house, and the disrepute this country generally feels toward this parliament, has been reflected in the presentation of the Canada pension plan. That is a regrettable situation. It is a shame that a limitation has been suggested for the debate on second reading. Second reading is actually the stage during which a bill is accepted in principle. With such a limitation many contributions which might be made will not be made.

I am also disappointed because this Canada pension plan is not nearly good enough for Canada. Had we adopted a pension plan years ago when the Unemployment Insurance Act was passed, we would at that time have gone to the provinces, held federal-provincial conferences, and come to some kind of a compromise on the part of all governments, including the government of that province which was least willing to accept unemployment insurance, and found a solution to the unemployment problem of much greater advantage to the Canadian worker than would have been possible in any other way. What is being done today by the Liberal government, is adopting legislation as a result of provincial-federal conferences, followed by a request that parliament rubber stamp what that conference has decided.

I give the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss LaMarsh) full credit for the additional plan she introduced, and while we may or may not agree with its terms, the plan was being offered to all the provinces. On the other hand, the bill now before us does not qualify as either fish or fowl, but is a plan developed at federal-provincial conferences, after taking into consideration the wishes of a province which has decided not to participate. I have heard many members who represent that province stand in their place and attempt to make some contribution to this debate, just as though they were going to participate in this plan.

Miss LaMarsh: They are.

Mr. Peters: The minister says they are going to participate. They are going to participate only because the federal government

has agreed that provinces can develop similar comprehensive plans, but I suggest that one province has already put into effect the plan which the federal government is going to adopt.

Miss LaMarsh: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would remind the hon. member that all members of this House of Commons will become contributors in respect of their indemnities in this place.

Mr. Peters: The members from Quebec may be able to do that, and that creates another round of arguments as to who is going to make contributions, and to whom.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that the government of Canada should have been prepared to propose a plan to be administered in a manner similar to the Unemployment Insurance Act, even though the development of such a plan would require more time and effort. The government should establish an act, even though requiring an amendment to the British North America Act, which amalgamates old age security and old age pensions. Such a plan would provide basic pensions, and all provinces would have to participate, or would not receive any old age security or old age pension.

I see the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Benson) shaking his head. He probably will not agree with my suggestion because such a plan would not involve negotiation with the provinces, and the provinces would have to accept it or reject it. I think that situation will eventually exist.

Many people in this country are becoming tired of this parliament rubber stamping the agreements negotiated at federal-provincial conferences. It seems impossible for the federal government to stand up and say, this is the legislation we are presenting and Quebec can either like it or lump it. This government is afraid to say that what it proposes must be accepted and participated in by all provinces, and that it could not care less which course the provinces followed, but that if a province did not wish to participate, that is its prerogative, and it would receive nothing. Someone else I am sure will say that such a proposal would involve an amendment to the British North America Act. This bill now before us involves two amendments to the B.N.A. Act, in order to provide for some of the supplementary benefits.

This social security scheme has certain benefits, advantages and disadvantages. I believe the main advantage is its portability. That is