

Adjournment Debate

and see that data is prepared in a form which the minister can convey to the provincial governments.

All the western provinces as well as the railways have agreed to the proposal and a meeting of the technical committee will take place in the next week or so. On March 1, the railways transmitted to the CTC actual cost data on the six specific movements mentioned in the minister's October letter to the CTC.

Although matters have not proceeded as quickly as the provinces would probably have liked, general progress has been made, and once the technical committee is functioning cost data can begin to flow. In the unfortunate event that this process breaks down—and we have no reason to believe it will—both the Minister of Transport and the Prime Minister are on record to the effect that they would resort to legislation to enforce disclosure if that were necessary.

SOCIAL SECURITY—OLD AGE SECURITY AND CANADA
PENSION PLAN PAYMENTS—POSSIBILITY OF REDUCTION OF
AGE OF ELIGIBILITY TO 60

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, unless something is done about it, I predict that when the next election comes, whether it is late or soon—

Mr. Orlikow: Soon.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):—one of the questions all parties will have to face is this: What did you do in the twenty-ninth parliament about pensions at age 60? This is the reason I am raising this issue on every possible occasion. This is the reason for the question I put to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) on Friday, March 8, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 313. These were the words of my question:

In view of the deep concern and need of many Canadians between the ages of 60 and 65 and in view of the wide support in Canada for the proposition that pensions should be available at age 60, may I ask the minister whether the government is giving consideration to proposing amendments to the Old Age Security Act and the Canada Pension Plan to establish pensions at age 60 on a voluntary basis?

The next entry in *Hansard* reads as follows:

HON. MARC LALONDE (MINISTER OF NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELFARE): I should like to assure the hon. member that there are many people below age 60 who are also in need of support. The policy of the government is to provide income supplementation and some form of guaranteed income to all people in need in this country without regard to age. Therefore, I do not plan to introduce a piecemeal amendment of the type the hon. member is proposing.

A further question and answer followed, saying much the same as was said in the first exchange. I should like to suggest to the minister that whenever any government is telling us the things it has done, it itemizes them piece by piece. That is the way most legislation in the social field as well as in other fields has grown in this country. It has been built piece by piece, stone by stone, as it were, so I am not fazed by the minister's statement that he does not want to do things on a piecemeal basis. That is what the Liberal Party has been doing in the field of social welfare since 1919.

The suggestion that there are other groups in need is one I confirm and endorse wholeheartedly. I welcome the steps the minister is taking in concert with his counter-

[Mr. Guay (St. Boniface).]

parts in the provinces to bring in something along the lines of a guaranteed income, something along the lines of providing supplementation for those who are at work but whose incomes are not sufficient to enable them to maintain a decent standard of living. But surely the minister is one Liberal in this House, even if he is the only one here tonight, who would agree that it is not good enough to talk about the needs of other groups, and then say we ought not to deal with the needs of one particular group.

He will have my full support in the other efforts he is making. At the same time, I urge him to give careful consideration to making pensions available at age 60, not on the same basis as old age security in the sense that everyone gets it, and now available at age 65, but certainly to all those who are out of the labour market or who are prepared to leave the labour market. I think the same should be done with respect to the Canada Pension Plan, and I see this change in these two pieces of legislation as one of the most important requirements in the field of social reform.

One of the reasons this is a matter of such concern and is so popular in this country is this: the pace of economic life has changed a great deal and there are a great many people over 50, or between 55 and 60, who find the economic rat race a little too much for them and feel they have the right to retire. There is also the problem in the many instances where one spouse is over 65 and the other is under that age. The solution to this, sometimes proposed, is that when one spouse gets the pension, no matter what the age of the other, the other should get it as well. I think that creates a problem. When one talks about a spouse under 65, then what about single persons under age 65, and so on? That problem would be largely solved in the average case of one spouse being three or four years older than the other if the person out of the labour market at age 60 could qualify for the pension.

● (2200)

So I put it to the minister again tonight, and I know from the answers he has made on previous occasions and from some of the comments he made today to the Canadian Labour Congress that he is ready to come up with arguments and reasons why we cannot do it. I suppose the real reason is that the Treasury Board does not agree at this time, that the Treasury Board feels the government did enough in this field during the last session. In any event, I appeal to the heart of the minister, which I believe is in the right place, and to his mind which I believe is aware of the political situation, particularly when I say to him that he should get moving, and especially that he should get the government moving on this urgent matter of pensions at age 60.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the remarks and the comments of the hon. member who is so well known across the country for his concern about senior citizens and pensions problems. I should first of all like to point out that it is not merely the Treasury Board that says we must be careful about public expenditures in this area, but also the Economic Council of Canada on which his friends and colleagues from the Canadian Labour Congress sit. Labour is well represented on this Economic