

Suggested Reduction of Pension Age

First, may I congratulate my hon. friend (Mr. Mather) who spoke before me, for his generous intention in introducing this resolution. However, in spite of the figures he quoted and the situation which prevails in the various countries that he mentioned in order to draw a parallel between the security system in Canada, I do not believe that, under the present circumstances, we ought to envy any other nation because, if there is a country where social legislation is well advanced, I think it is certainly Canada.

Mr. Speaker, there are some people—and I do not pretend to share necessarily their opinions—who are not much in favour of the universal pension plan, because they claim that many people who would be in receipt of a pension do not need it at all, and I really believe that at the present time we cannot claim that there are people so unfortunate that they cannot find the necessary subsistence.

I realize that our social security system is especially concerned with old age security, and the efforts to set up a pension plan in this country, efforts which continue—one has only to refer to the statement made yesterday by the Prime Minister—are precisely aimed at solving the particular problem mentioned by my hon. friend.

The Canada pension plan provides for standard old age security allowances for 65 year old people. However, besides that, an allowance related to the gain should be provided, and the Canada pension plan has been designed to include this supplementary allowance. One has only to consider briefly the results of such a scheme to see how a participant can take advantage of it, if he decides to retire at age 67.

If his average contributory gains entitle him to a pension of \$100, first he is eligible to the pension related to the \$20 gain, to which \$61 are added for old age security, which gives him a total pension of \$81 per month.

In the case of an older citizen who wishes to retire, if his average income is \$200, his pension based on his taxable income will be \$40, plus \$61, so that he will receive a total of \$101 as old age security pension—and this is in the case of a 67 year old retired citizen.

On the other hand, if such a citizen has average monthly earnings of \$300, he will be entitled to a pension based on those earnings amounting to \$60. This person will thus receive total pension of \$121, in view of the monthly amount of \$61 that must be added as old age security payment and, here again, this is in the case of a 67 year old pensioner. One could keep on this subject—

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member quotes those figures, does he mean the provincial pension plan of Quebec or the Ottawa plan?

Mr. Choquette: Mr. Speaker, the pension plan I am speaking of is the national pension plan of Canada. My hon. friend, having heard the Prime Minister's statement must know that negotiations are now under way to carry out that national pension plan.

Mr. Speaker, to prove to the mover of this resolution that this pension plan more particularly aims at helping the people of the 65 to 70 age group—and I shall more particularly discuss the case of those of age 67, because this resolution would grant a pension to people of 67—I shall say that, if the contributor had a wife the same age as himself, that is 67 years, the combined monthly pension would be increased by another amount of \$61. Thus, the old age security pension for the wife and the combined amounts of the monthly pension which I just mentioned would amount to \$142, that is \$60 plus \$82, and \$197 respectively. The benefits paid to a 67 year old person would therefore be much more generous, under the proposed plan, than if the people of 67 were only to receive the \$75 old age security pension.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned a moment ago the statements of the right hon. Prime Minister, who said that the government was studying the details of a pension plan which the government of the province of Quebec intends to submit on a provincial basis. Without waiving the principles on which the Canada pension plan is to be based, the federal government can consider the opportunity of making a few changes in its pension plan which would ensure that, once passed, it would be the same for the whole of Canada, which is obviously desirable.

Mr. Speaker, it would be interesting to quote a few figures to show to what extent the old age security system has evolved in this country. If we consider the number of pensioners aged 70 or over, there are in Canada, 971,123 beneficiaries which represents an expenditure of about \$885 million. As far as old age assistance is concerned, that is the help granted to indigent people in the 65 to 69 age group, there are 105,000 beneficiaries, which means an expenditure of \$20 million for the federal government as well as for the province, as it is a joint plan where each government contributes an equal share. Therefore, we can say that 105,000 Canadian citizens get this old age assistance provided for those who are 65 years of age.

Mr. Speaker, in the field of social security, the government does all in its power to help