

was not that the rich could not take care of themselves; it was just that under medicare the rich would not only have to take care of themselves but perhaps others who could not.

While there are some similarities between programs such as the old age pension, medicare and the Canada Pension Plan, there are also differences, and it is those differences that I was trying to point out earlier. With the Canada Pension Plan it is easier to relate the actual contributions made by the person to the benefits he receives, very much like private insurance and in contrast to the other programs which are government insurance programs.

Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge (Mr. Saltsman) presented the House with a carefully prepared rationale for the bill before us as he sees it. Usually, I find myself persuaded by the hon. member without too much difficulty but as he has indicated, he is not certain that he has persuaded all his colleagues in this party. The hon. member congratulated the government for having changed its mind on this matter. There have been times when I have been willing to agree that the government should be congratulated for changing its mind, but I am not convinced that this is such an occasion.

I am rather fearful that the provision for opting out, of which was discussed in detail by the hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge, embarks us upon a slippery path in respect of legislation which is of general application. One can think of a number of situations when persuasive arguments could be advanced for allowing certain groups within our society to opt out of certain provisions in legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps hon. members would agree that we now call it four o'clock.

● (1600)

Mr. Reid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions, as a result of which we might rise at this point until the call of the bells for royal assent, if the hon. member who is to introduce a matter for discussion in private members' hour is prepared to agree. If members are agreeable, I ask that it be made an order of the House.

Mr. Bell: Mr. Speaker, we agree. If it is possible, we want to get our Liberal friends over to their convention. They are of absolutely no use around here, but if they are over there we can wish them an interesting and happy time.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, as I said around five o'clock this morning, I do not like to be difficult. The hon. member for Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Mather) whose bill is slated for this afternoon would like to speak on his bill, even if the private members' hour is to be only 45 minutes long. If any Liberals want to stay, they are welcome.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I take it that the House agrees to the calling of the particular order standing in the name of the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Emergency Telephone Number

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

[English]

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION ACT

AMENDMENT TO ESTABLISH UNIVERSAL EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBER

Mr. Barry Mather (Surrey-White Rock) moved that Bill C-37, to establish a universal emergency telephone number, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications.

He said: Mr. Speaker, as the bill indicates, the purpose of the bill is to amend the National Transportation Act by adding immediately after section 22(1)(i) the following:

(j) provide for the establishment by all Canadian telephone companies of a universal emergency reporting telephone number.

While I have little expectation or even hope that the bill will be passed, I believe that the discussion of what is proposed can be useful, as the discussion will arouse in the public mind and in communities which will later be effected, an interest in the subject. In this way we will speed up the establishment of a provision such as this which is an additional step in the field of public safety. This additional step involves the establishment of a single emergency number through which people can summon police, fire or ambulance help in any city of Canada or, indeed, of North America because in the United States a great deal of progress has been made already in establishing that single, universal aid number in the telephone system.

I point out that I cannot do better than quote from an article which appeared in *Life* magazine some five years ago. Since that article appeared, the single emergency telephone number has been introduced in some 250 area systems, and an additional 60 systems are to operate with the number by the end of 1974. It will be installed in those systems in the United States, Mr. Speaker. The article reads:

It won't be long before 911 takes over as the most memorable trio of digits in American culture.

The telephone industry... has announced that it is ready to start converting its phones to a single emergency number that could summon police, fire or ambulance help in any city on the country.

The wonder of it all is that it took the nation with half the phones in the world until 1968 to decide that the traditional means for reporting emergencies are close to anarchy. In Los Angeles County there are 50 different numbers for the police. In the St. Louis area there are 32 police numbers and 57 for fire emergencies. The numbers themselves, each with a different mind-cracking combination of seven digits, are a guarantee that nobody will be able to remember them when they need them most.

To make full use of the 911 system, cities will have to set up central dispatchers for their emergency services—a process that fortunately is already under way in some areas. And for those citizens stranded with an emergency to report and nothing but folding money in their pockets...

American telephone companies will come to their rescue. I continue:

As the 911 systems goes into effect, the company proposes changing all its pay phones so that emergency calls—or those to "0" for operator—will not require a dime to go through. In effect, the nation's 1,363,000 public booths will become direct emergency phones.

The speed with which the new system goes into operation now depends on the cities agreeing to install it. They should regard it as a 911 situation.