

Canada Pension Plan (No. 2)
GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA PENSION PLAN (No. 2)

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING ANNUAL INCREASES AND
LEVEL OF INCOME ON WHICH CONTRIBUTIONS WILL BE
PAID

The House resumed, from Tuesday, October 30, consideration of the motion of Mr. Lalonde that Bill C-224, to amend the Canada Pension Plan, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Rose). May we have order, please. I think it is elementary and hon. members should know they should not hold conferences standing or sitting in the chamber. The hon. member has been recognized and he has the floor. If hon. members want to have talks or discussions, they should have them behind the curtain or in the lobbies. That is what those places are for.

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My words may not be of a great deal of interest to people who have other matters to discuss. However, the minister to whom we address our remarks, through you, Sir, might have more than a passing interest in some of the comments which will be made, not only at the moment but by members who will follow me in the debate on second reading of Bill C-224. At ten o'clock last evening I was approximately two-thirds of the way through the remarks I wished to make on this bill. There were certain suggestions I wanted to make.

I shall quickly summarize my three suggestions and then return to the second one. The first suggestion is that we should broaden the base of the Canada Pension Plan so that larger benefits would accrue to the contributors. I object to the fact that the Canada Pension Plan is considered only as a supplementary pension plan.

The second point is that I think we should be making provision for voluntary earlier retirement. Many individuals in this country would like to retire and perhaps would like to search for a new career. They are precluded from doing so because of the fact that we seem to be locked into the concept that someone must begin work at age 20 and continue with his nose to the grindstone until age 65. I see no reason, in this day and age, why this should be necessary.

We should also consider the fact that there are many people in our society who spend a good deal of their lives unemployed. I think it might be possible to accomplish the two ends, if not simultaneously at least in a reasonable way, through satisfying the need for employment among the young and providing for relief, if you like, for those people who no longer wish to be part of the work force but are prevented from retiring for no reason other than their commitments and responsibilities and the financial slashing one takes when one goes on pension in this country. I think that really applies to the first point. I was referring to those people who might wish to retire at an earlier date.

[Mr. Sharp.]

It has been reported to me, I think fairly reliably, that in West Germany the railway workers have a contributory plan which allows them, after 25 years, regardless of the age at which they started employment, to retire with a 75 per cent pension. In contrast, in this country the United Automobile Workers have a formula that is called "30 and out," which means that after a railway worker has worked on the assembly line, or in some other dehumanizing occupation, for 30 years and has paid into a contributory plan which would have subsequent benefits, he could retire and begin another career or just go fishing. I understand, however, that in order for that plan to be in effect it must be registered in Ottawa.

I am told that under the present regulations—perhaps the minister will correct me if I am wrong—any retirement plan in Canada, in contrast to the United States, which calls for retirement under age 55 is not eligible for registration in Canada. I think that is an archaic type of regulation if it in fact does exist. I am sure the minister knows that, just as regulations can be implemented, they can also be changed. It is the case that workers have contributed their own money to the kind of plan that would allow this kind of relief from the treadmill at age 55, then certainly no impediment should be placed in their way. I suggest that each year we should try to bring down, in respect of the Canada Pension Plan, the retirement age for those who wish to retire earlier. Those who do not wish to do so could continue working.

In North America we have long been caught up in what is called the work ethic for some people, although I do not believe for most Canadians. There may be a number who may not wish to retire. Some people are as young as ever at age 65, in terms of outlook and sometimes in terms of physical capacity. Other people are burnt-out at age 30. I give no specific example and I do not look at anyone, certainly at none of my colleagues. I think those who wish to draw a pension after an early retirement should have that right. If the base were broadened, and if the contributions people make were increased from 1.8 per cent to 2 per cent or 3 per cent, this would allow flexibility in respect of the Canada Pension Plan so that early retirement would be possible for people who wish it.

Some people might like to quit their jobs and work at another occupation. So far as I am concerned, they should be free to do so if they wish. Perhaps they would like to start some kind of business which would provide employment. We have a great habit in this country, through DREE, ARDA, IRDIA and other such programs, to give bountiful gifts to companies so that more people might be employed. The fact is, however, that small business employs far more people than large business and industry. So far as I am concerned, people who wish to retire early in order to start a new business that would employ people should be given the opportunity to do so. In that way some of the largesse we give to IBM, General Motors and DuPont of Canada might be used to provide the capital necessary to start businesses which would provide the employment that is necessary in this country.

I feel there is no real rationale, except tradition, which demands that a young man should start work at 18 or 20 years of age and continue until age 65. I believe everything is reversed. We send our kids off at age 21, through OFY