

Canada Pension Plan

tario toward a national plan. He points out that it is possible for the province of Ontario to opt out and operate its own plan. He said:

With regard to the alternative of operating our own plan, may I say that our studies clearly indicate that it would be entirely feasible for the government of Ontario to do so; indeed, there are substantial arguments in favour of our so doing.

We would then have a plan which could be operated to our satisfaction, both efficiently and economically, for the benefit of the people of this province. We would preserve the constitutional rights which are ours under the British North America Act. We would have complete control over all the funds generated in this province. We would have complete control over any future amendments respecting contributions, benefits and other financial aspects. In addition, although a provincial plan must be comparable to the federal plan, I am convinced that we could make improvements and simplifications in benefits, contributions and administrative features of the plan if we were to devise and operate our own.

In spite of the statement that the people of Ontario could probably benefit by operating their own plan, what did the premier go on to say. He said, in effect, no. These are his words:

The first duty and responsibility of the government of this province is, of course, to look after the interests of our own people. This is our primary objective. On the other hand our position with respect to the whole of Canada and its people is one of which we are proud and which we have traditionally maintained. Thus the decisions we make must be made within the broad context of what is best for the Canadian nation as well as for the province of Ontario.

Mr. Robarts goes on to make other statements along those lines. I maintain in all seriousness that had it not been for the stated policy of this government allowing opting out, it could have been possible even within the constitutional rights of the provinces, indeed it might still be possible, that a truly national plan could be developed.

Remember that a province does not have to state its intention of opting out until this bill has become law. There is a possibility that other provinces may opt out. We know, for instance, that the premier of British Columbia has done many things which have been unexpected in some quarters and it could well be that other provinces would opt out. The premier of Ontario has indicated the real danger to national portability if this were to happen.

I say again that the position taken by this government was predetermined by its policy of allowing any province to opt out, and I hope members of the house and the people of Canada will realize that this is not neces-

[Mr. Chatterton.]

sarily a national plan providing for complete portability.

Miss LaMarsh: I know that hon. members wish to move along with this uncontroversial section but I can hardly allow some of the remarks made by the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich to pass without comment. It was pointed out long ago that when this legislation is passed by the House of Commons there is no guarantee that every province in Canada and all of our people will be covered by the plan. This has been stated categorically by the government ever since it first presented its proposals to the provinces in July of 1963 with regard to a national contributory wage related pension plan. It will be recalled that at that time no province apart from the province of Quebec indicated that it had any interest in exercising its undoubted constitutional rights in this field—the rights to which the premier of Ontario referred in the speech quoted by the hon. member. Yet the hon. member tries to make the point that had this government taken a different attitude no province would have considered the possibility of legislating in this field. I suggest the hon. member's argument is a non sequitur at this point, as it is at many other points.

However, he said something more important. He suggested that this is not a truly national plan. I submit that by such a statement he is misleading not only this committee but the country at large.

An hon. Member: He has gone now.

Miss LaMarsh: I know the hon. member is not sufficiently interested to stay in the chamber during the discussion—

Mr. Monteith: Oh.

Miss LaMarsh: —but I will not permit to be left on the record, uncontradicted, some of the misstatements he has made, intended to mislead the people of this country.

An hon. Member: He is back.

Mr. Churchill: Don't be so partisan.

Miss LaMarsh: I am not being partisan. I am trying to explain the legislation which has been carefully worked over for two years and upon which one of the best committees ever set up by parliament deliberated at great length. It is obvious that some hon. members have not understood anything about the plan. But the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich who was a member of the committee should well have understood—unless