

Canada Pension Plan

independently and at other times in concert with the provinces. There is a whole series of programs involving not only the aged but also other Canadians. I should like to talk about this for a moment.

One cannot consider the Canada Pension Plan in isolation; it is not the only piece of legislation that affects the elderly in Canada. As we know, the government's proposal for a universal pension of \$100 per month is at the report stage and will soon be brought forward for third reading. In addition, there is the guaranteed income supplement. When you combine these two programs you will see that there is a minimum guaranteed income of \$170 a month for single persons aged 65 and over, and \$325 a month for married couples. That does not take into consideration the Canada Pension Plan. Those amounts are by no means small. The figure may be somewhat less than our elderly would like; it may be less than they deserve in view of their contribution to the well-being of Canada through the work they have done during their lives, but it is none the less significant and the benefit is valuable. Also, as far as I can ascertain from statistics, our benefits cannot be matched by those of any other country in the western world.

In our over-all review we will take into consideration not only the Canada Pension Plan, the old age security pension and guaranteed income supplement but the family allowance program or the FISP proposal that was brought forward in the last parliament under which we would pay allowances for children. As well, we shall consider youth allowances and welfare, which is administered by the municipalities but to which the federal government contributes 50 per cent, disability pensions, the Canada Assistance Plan and, as I mentioned before, the Canada Pension Plan. If we are to come up with a comprehensive program all these matters must be looked into and rationalized to make sure that every segment of our society is properly treated.

One comment in the remarks of the hon. member for Moose Jaw alarmed me. He suggested that no one in Canada should be on welfare except the aged, the temporarily unemployed and the handicapped. I do not want to put words into the hon. member's mouth, but that is how I understood his remarks and I think *Hansard* will substantiate the correctness of my interpretation. In my view, that is an oversimplification and does not cover many areas of serious concern inasmuch as the government must provide assistance to those in need.

Let me give a significant example that was not mentioned by the hon. member. Unmarried mothers need assistance from public revenues. Also, one could give the examples of widows and orphans. You could go on and on speaking about areas in which the government must enter the field in order to give assistance. We have given assistance in these fields in the past and will continue to do so despite anything the hon. member may have said about welfare programs. I think it is true that no one really wants to see a welfare state, in the sense that there may be abuses of welfare programs. Perhaps welfare is really not the right word to use. Nevertheless, it is clear that the government must accept its social responsibilities and for the common good intervene to help those in need. Regard-

[Mr. Cafik.]

less of the category the people concerned may fall into, this must be done.

Also, there are other programs which simply redistribute wealth. These are required so that wealth does not become overly centralized in the hands of a few. Anyone who looks at the question rationally will realize that this is really what income tax is all about. The government takes money in and redistributes it sometimes in a way that is better than that in which the money would have been distributed originally. The result is that larger numbers of citizens benefit from the over-all increase in the gross national product and in the wealth of the nation.

In conclusion, may I say that my department, as well as all departments of government, is concerned about the anomalies which have been created within social program structures. One of those anomalies affects the person who is self-employed, such as the farmer. Problems of averaging, and so on, must be considered. It is sometimes easy to state a problem but it is not so easy to find an equitable solution. The government is concerned about this problem and will be bringing it before the federal-provincial conference in April. I hope that the deliberations of that body will result in a better kind of program which will involve the whole social structure in Canada, so that we will minimize red tape and maximize benefits as well as cut down the excessive costs that might be involved in some of these programs which are often duplicates of others. This will require much co-operation and good will, not only on the part of members of this House but also by the provinces which must act in co-operation and in concert with the federal government.

Mr. John M. Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) who proposed this motion is to be commended for bringing it before us. However, I would take issue with the narrow way in which he has framed the problem. Its implications are far broader than he suggested. What he is really dealing with is not just a program involving farmers whose incomes fluctuate; he is also suggesting that people in other trades and occupations whose incomes fluctuate should come under the ambit of a motion such as this.

In addition, the matter is of concern to me inasmuch as it touches on the question brought forward by the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Rowland) which deals with the possibility of women who are not in the labour force also participating in the Canada Pension Plan. In addition, another group experiences difficulty with respect to the Canada Pension Plan, our native Indians. Under the provisions of the Canada Pension Plan legislation it is not possible for an Indian earning income on a reserve to pay into the Canada Pension Plan. If an Indian earns income other than on a reservation, he is permitted to contribute to the Canada Pension Plan from that income.

• (1750)

At the present time there is a distinction in the Income tax Act as to the way in which the income of an Indian is treated depending upon where it is earned. As collections for the Canada Pension Plan are basically administratively controlled by the Department of National Revenue, it was determined at the time of passage of the Canada