

tion which was introduced and passed some years before I was elected. As a means of protesting personally against this plan, I have failed to take out a social insurance number. I still do not have a social insurance number, even though I get periodic messages from the Department of National Revenue saying that I do not have a social insurance number.

I dare the minister, who is sitting on the other side of the House, to instruct the department to lay charges against me for not taking out a social insurance number. The messages from the department tell me that I am in breach of the legislation. Time will tell if the department will ever catch up with me. The department has wasted a great deal of postage in trying to encourage me to take out a social insurance number. Actually, the government of Canada paid for a young employee to go from Calgary to Drumheller, a distance of 90 miles; that employee visited me and reminded me that I had not taken out a social insurance number. An attempt was made to persuade me that I should take out such number. However, I do not believe in the Canada Pension Plan. If I do not believe in it, I do not think I should participate in it. On the other hand, if I cannot get out of my obligations under the Canada Pension Plan, I do not see why anybody else should escape them, either. That is my position in a nutshell.

I would be happy to let anybody out from under, so long as that right is extended to everybody who wants to get out. So long as the plan is compulsory and applies to everybody in this country, I do not see why certain small groups should be allowed to opt out, merely because they do not want to participate, as the hon. member for Crowfoot said. If they do not want to take out social insurance numbers, they can look on the contributions to the plan as a tax, because they are a tax. The Canada Pension Plan will never be sound actuarially. It is very much like the unemployment insurance plan, although it is really quite wrong to use the term, "insurance" when talking about that part of our statute law.

As I said before, when you find various groups living together in society, life is much easier for everybody if their respective levels of life are not too different. Federal and provincial legislatures in this country set minimum standards and, minimum wages. They establish health standards and various other standards. In the end these all add to the cost of doing business.

As the hon. member for Crowfoot said, the people about whom we are talking at present are primarily interested in the business of farming. I suppose many city dwellers think that somehow the seeds get in the ground, that the rain makes them grow, the wind threshes the grain and the crop sort of falls into bins, without anybody making too great an effort. The truth is that food production is a pretty specialized operation in this country, and certain costs are associated with that business. I have still to be convinced that contributions to the Canada Pension Plan are not part of the cost of doing business. As the Hutterite brethren of our community farm one million acres or more in Alberta alone, it is evident that they are engaged in the business of farming in a large way. If they are not subject to this tax, which in fact is what the Canada Pension Plan contribution is, they will have an unfair competitive

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advantage over their neighbours. They should be subject to the same cost of doing business as everyone else.

• (1650)

We can go on to the amendment, level of living. In my opinion, this is just another step toward giving more arbitrary power to a minister of the Crown. If we continue on this way, we will not have any laws that are real laws. We will have regulations that some individuals can interpret. No one in this country will know where he stands. However, the fact remains that to have orderly development in this country, we must know where we stand and not be at the mercy of some chief administrator.

After all, most ministers are merely the political heads of departments. In many ways, they do not have too much input in the actual decisions made in their departments. They tend to be at the mercy of the bureaucracy. The more we allow the bureaucracy what is, in effect, taxing powers without any responsibility to the electors of this country, the more we will go down the road toward political serfdom.

This amendment should be given favourable consideration by members of this House. After all, how are we going to define a level of living? What are the parameters? How are we to look at that objectively? The Canadian standard of living is probably high enough. However, we all recognize the fact that it varies from coast to coast. It is not the same in every region, but at least there has developed some sort of underpinning for a definition of the Canadian standard of living.

Possibly Statistics Canada now has the situation in hand. Maybe they can tell us what the various provincial standards are across the country. This could be used as a basis for some measurement. What are to be the guidelines to determine the level of living? I think that clause could raise no end of problems in the administration of this act. I urge all members to give serious consideration to allowing the amendment of the hon. member for Crowfoot.

Hon. Robert Stanbury (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, if there are no other points to be raised, perhaps I can comment briefly on the arguments that have been made.

I wish to point out that the amendment would not seem to accomplish what the mover had intended because it would make the section read that the test would then be "their Canadian standard". I am sure this leaves the House in complete confusion as to the intention of the clause as it would be amended.

Apart from that, as hon. members know, the Canada Pension Plan is an earnings related plan. For each individual, the general level of living for the contributor is the test for those who contribute. It does not seem unreasonable that the general level of living for this particular group, or the individuals making the applications for exemption, would be the test in this section.

Even if the hon. member had drafted his amendment, as I think he intended, to try to relate this criterion to a Canadian cross-country standard, members will realize very quickly the extreme difficulty of defining and interpreting that phrase. As the minister who would have to be responsible for making that interpretation, I appeal to the