

*Canada Pension Plan*

**Mr. Chatterton:** It was agreed, so far as we were concerned, that they would be passed without amendment, but it was not agreed that there would not be brief discussion here and there throughout their passage.

Clause 3 describes the circumstances in which the Canada pension plan will not be operative in any province. In other words, the plan applies in all provinces but under certain circumstances described in clause 3 it will not apply in any province which opts out under the terms of the clause. The point I want to make is that words have been banded around that this is a universal plan, a national plan, a Canadian plan. In fact its name, the Canada pension plan, seems to imply that under all circumstances it will be a national plan operative in the same way in every part of Canada. It is well for members of the committee and Canadians generally to realize this need not be so.

Clause 3 provides that any province can opt out after due notice, and under the provisions of section 94(a) of the B.N.A. Act all provinces can legislate in this field. The people of Canada should realize that it is not axiomatic and necessarily a fact that this plan will become national in scope and will be completely portable. There is a possibility it might not, and in support of my contention I want to quote Hon. John Robarts, premier of Ontario, in a statement he made to the legislature of Ontario on January 21, 1965. Referring to the question of whether his province was to come into the plan or opt out he said:

In the present circumstances, if we were to propose a plan in which there were any marked differences, even though 'comparable', we might seriously impair the principle of national portability of pensions, which has been one of our goals for many years.

You will recall, Mr. Chairman, that clause 3 provides that a province can opt out provided that within a specified time it passes a bill through its own legislature, establishing a plan with comparable benefits. In effect the premier of Ontario says that if they were to opt out it might impair the national portability of the Canada pension plan. I quote again from his speech, which is to be found at page 1787 of the minutes of the proceedings and evidence of the joint committee:

In coming to this decision—

That is, the decision as to whether or not they should join the Canada pension plan.

—I am well aware that the government of Quebec has indicated that it intends to administer its own pension plan, which will become comparable to the Canada pension plan and, it is hoped, will not seriously impair interprovincial portability.

I emphasize those words:

—it is hoped, will not seriously impair interprovincial portability. This decision by the province of Quebec is based on the determination of its government to administer its own social welfare legislation. While I can sympathize with this decision, I nevertheless do not despair that in the future the government of Quebec may see fit to enter into the national plan, which will be so similar to its own. If this could come to pass, we would achieve our ultimate goal of a truly national pension plan that would go far toward setting the pattern for future, nation-wide, social welfare legislation.

The object of my brief remarks is to point out that under this bill a province can opt out after due notice and within a certain period of time and, if it does, the Canada pension plan will not, so to speak, become operative in that province if the province at the time of opting out within a specific time passes its own plan which is comparable as far as benefits are concerned. But at any time thereafter, that province or any other province can change its plan in any way it sees fit. This is within their constitutional rights. The people should know this. There is no assurance that the Canada pension plan will be completely national in scope and completely portable. It is true that subsequent clauses in the bill provide for agreements to be entered into between the federal government and a province which may opt out. But such agreements can be made only subsequent to the present bill becoming law and subsequent to the opting out province passing its own legislation. I certainly hope with the best will in the world that this is not the way in which things will turn out. But this is what may happen.

It might have taken a little more time to have arrived by agreement at a plan which would have had a greater chance of becoming a national plan without the possibility of destroying national portability. I believe that what prompted the present approach of the government is its well established policy of co-operative federalism. I believe the attitude taken by the government in establishing this pension plan is in line with its stated policy of allowing provinces to opt out of federal-provincial programs. Had the government not established this policy it might have been possible to have set up a different program, one which would have had greater assurance of being national in its scope. In this regard I should like to quote again one or two of the statements made by the premier of Ontario in his speech before the legislature on January 21, 1965. This indicates the attitude of the premier of On-