

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, it will hardly come as a great surprise to the minister if I say to him that I see little likelihood that we will be opposing this measure, fighting it to the death or in any other way trying to make difficult the passage of a measure which, as he pointed out, has already the unanimous approval of the provinces. This, of course, is one of the aspects to which I made reference not long ago, that there is something akin to a *fait accompli* when the House of Commons takes up measures which have been dealt with by two levels of government in executive conclave. Indeed, much of the administration of this country is moving into this particular area of dual governmental administrative procedure.

I must observe, also, that the minister's making a speech and my following him is becoming quite a habit, and I am wondering if none of his colleagues in the cabinet has any legislation to bring before parliament, or is he the only working minister in the whole lot? It seems we did have the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner), in a rather gentle and detached way, presiding over the CN financing bill within the last few days; but we all know that bill has been around for several years and one has to look through one's notes in order to recall when it was first brought to the baptismal font of this legislative cathedral.

Although it is not because I want to go out and hear the Quebec election returns, because I do not think there is a great deal of contention about them, I wish I could stand up and say in a few sentences that this is an excellent measure and we are for it. However, we live in times and under conditions whereby measures of this kind, measures that are very commendable, even in the process of their discussion, agreement and presentation become outdated. It is not possible, it seems, under current dispensation for this minister who is working very hard in this particular area to keep up with the needs of the people.

The problem is that this change was decided and agreed upon some months ago. I believe these figures came out, certainly in the orange paper and perhaps in the Speech from the Throne. One wonders, in view of escalating living costs, whether they have become somewhat unrealistic.

I quite agree with the minister's statement—I do not know whether or not he was quoting the provincial ministers—that the ceilings were grossly inadequate. They certainly were, and the movement upward is to be heartily commended. Certainly we want the movement upward in respect of these pensions not delayed for one single day. Needless to say, I rejoice in the departure from that unrealistic and iniquitous 2 per cent figure. We on this side of the House are not recent converts to that particular point of view. My distinguished colleague, the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard), in the previous parliament, on one of the allotted days under Standing Order 58, moved a no confidence motion which read as follows:

● (2030)

That this House condemns the government's failure to contribute to pensions, allowances and other benefits granted or administered by the government a yearly percentage increase corresponding to the percentage increase in the consumer price index for Canada.

That is what my colleague moved in 1972 in the month of March, some months before a certain event took place

Canada Pension Plan (No. 2)

in October. In 1971, as was alluded to this afternoon in that very interesting discussion on procedure in which the minister made a brief intervention and I, with greater caution, made none, reference was made to a bill which I brought before the House which, had it been in order, had it been accepted and passed, indeed would have put into effect the actual cost of living increase two years ago instead of at the present time.

So, with all the modesty which I always display, I may say that I personally am not a recent convert to the idea of knocking out that unrealistic—now pathetically unrealistic—figure of 2 per cent. I can assure the minister that we all are behind him in this or, perhaps if we want to be nasty, he is behind us; but it does not make any difference who is behind whom—we are all trying to help the Canadian people, and that is what really counts.

One notes the minister's suggestion that we have yet another Canada Pension Plan, No. 3, and that we should therefore move to discuss and pass with reasonable expedition, this bill dealing with the raising of the ceilings in effect and making realistic the cost of living increase. I think that is a good way of proceeding, although it means that he and I again will become the workhorses of the House of Commons in the legislative sense. So there will be a time for ampler discussion on broad concepts with particular reference to the question of the Canada Pension Plan and, indeed, the whole question of the social security system of the country generally.

I was impressed by the reference in the dominion-provincial communique, to which I believe the minister made an allusion this afternoon, to the following effect:

... effective in 1974, retirement pensions will become payable at age 65 to any person who has ceased to contribute to the plan, regardless of his or her earnings. Thus the earnings test which has been applied to people between 65 and 69 will be eliminated. The Government of Quebec has already liberalized the earnings test under the Quebec Pension Plan.

This is something which we look forward to discussing with great seriousness. I have said before in the House that I think this country has reached the stage where its citizens should be able, if they wish, to withdraw from the active labour force at 60 years of age. I think also—and I have said this before—that it is not incumbent upon the government either to put people at that age out to pasture or on the shelf, whichever metaphor one prefers. But I think there should be that level of security from this state that they may be able voluntarily to withdraw from the active working force, and the state should be able to provide them means whereby they can live a full and interesting life, one without fear of economic disaster.

I believe that that is a very important goal. I have always been slightly intrigued by the situation under the Canada Pension Plan where, if you carry through with some brittle logic, you would say that we discourage the guys from 65 to 69 from working, but it is quite all right for the fellows from 70 to 99 to enter the working force and they will not suffer. Of course, that is carrying the logic to a brittle conclusion.

Another thing which is obvious in the structure of the Canada Pension Plan, as we talk about ceilings and as we compute pension rates, is that so many people will find that as they carry through the Canada Pension Plan they