

Canada Pension Plan

to go to get a number, to get a number. The Minister of Labour indicated within the half hour that 6.5 million people have numbers now.

With respect to the Canada pension plan, it is not possible to make a contribution unless you have a number. If you do it by name, the contributions over a 30 or 40 year period may be lost or assigned to someone else. If you do not have a number for your own protection, your contributions may not be counted in your favour. If you do not have that number, you will not be able to make a contribution. If you do not make a contribution, this being a wage related scheme, you will not get any benefits.

Mr. Skoreyko: The answer to my question, then, is that the social insurance numbering scheme is, in fact, compulsory, contrary to what the minister said in this house a few minutes ago. The statement is on record in *Hansard* that the social insurance numbering scheme was not compulsory. The statement was made by the Minister of Labour. You now say it is compulsory, and that unless you have a number you do not qualify under the Canada pension plan.

Mr. MacEachen: I think I can clarify the point raised. The issuance of a number is compulsory and always has been compulsory of any member of the insured population of Canada. That has been so for 20 years. It became apparent last year that the unemployment insurance commission had to issue new books and register the insured population under the terms of the law. Since it was anticipated that a Canada pension plan would be forthcoming we stated that though those who were insured were obliged by law to register, any others might come forward voluntarily to do so. The commission has received applications from more than six million persons under its program and it is estimated that a million of those persons came forward voluntarily. We thought we should take advantage of the issuance of these books to anticipate approval of the Canada pension plan. The result is that 6,314,000 applications have now been received for social insurance numbers, so it will be unnecessary for this number of persons who may be affected by the Canada pension plan to come forward and register at this time. It is a fact that a getting of a social insurance number under the bill now before us is compulsory for all persons covered by this plan.

Mr. Skoreyko: The answer, then, is that it is compulsory for everyone.

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Mr. MacEachen: Under the Canada pension plan.

Mr. Skoreyko: That is precisely what I wanted answered.

Mr. MacEachen: Of course, when we registered last year we did not have authority such as is now anticipated under the Canada pension plan. We could only rely on the authority of the Unemployment Insurance Act in respect of persons in insured occupations, and ask the others to come forward voluntarily. And one million did.

Mr. Skoreyko: I should still like to know why the Minister of National Health and Welfare said a moment ago that the social insurance numbers system was not being imposed by this legislation and had nothing to do with it. She said that a moment ago. The Minister of Labour now says it is compulsory under this scheme. Where is the consistency in those statements? I have asked a question and I think the Minister of Labour is about to answer it, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MacEachen: I have stated the facts as I see them. I do not see any contradiction between what I have stated and what the minister of health and welfare has stated, if we take into account the time sequence which has passed.

Mr. Skoreyko: I am not concerned about the time sequence. A few minutes ago the Minister of National Health and Welfare—and I made a note of it—said the social insurance numbering scheme was not imposed by this legislation. Yet the Minister of Labour a moment later said that in fact it was. Is the Minister of Labour now saying that his colleague the minister of health and welfare was wrong?

Mr. Benson: I think this could be cleared up by simply saying that the present insurance numbers which people have do not arise out of this legislation, but that the present system will be extended compulsorily by this legislation, because those who do not get a number voluntarily under the unemployment insurance legislation will be required to have a number by this legislation if they are covered by it.

Mr. Skoreyko: Then this legislation compels everyone in Canada to apply for a number.

Mr. Benson: If they are covered under the plan. It is an extension of the system which has already been started. This legisla-

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