

those who are still working at that age, in spite of some difficulties, would leave their job to younger workers.

It would be a way of clearing the labour market and making more jobs available to the younger people.

For all those reasons, I think that it is urgent for the minister to tell the House at least whether his officials are considering the problem. The people are waiting. Every day, hundreds of letters dealing with this matter are received from Cr ditiste ridings. Personally I receive at least some twenty letters a week from people asking: When shall we have pensions at 60? So, I have to reply to them: "When the Minister of National Health and Welfare makes up his mind". This is why I would like the Minister to tell the people of Canada at least whether he has started considering the possibility of lowering the age of entitlement from 65 to 60.

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest to the comment made by the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte) on this matter which certainly concerns all hon. members as well as a great number of Canadian citizens.

He is wondering whether officials of my department are examining the matter or have done so. I believe there is nothing secret in this respect and if he did not get a reply in the House recently it was because of a technical or procedural problems and not because of a refusal or a failure on my part, since the reply I would have given at the time is that my department is indeed examining that matter, as it examines a great many others in the area of social security. In that field there have been many suggestions, hypotheses brought forward by all kinds of agencies, by politicians of all parties during the past few years and there is practically no subject raised in this country in the field of income security which has not been the object of careful and thorough study by officials of my department.

So, in this case, it is not merely a question of study; an important problem crops up with regard to the prohibitive cost of such a proposal. There is another important aspect to be considered and it has to do with that part of the Speech from the Throne dealing with federal-provincial relations. The fact that the provinces in some cases do not provide enough social welfare shows that at the present time they are having a hard time finding the money required. That is why we have called for the end of April a meeting where all aspects of social security will be reviewed. I think that before making any proposals in that field, I will surely have to consult with my provincial counterparts.

### *Adjournment Debate*

Furthermore, as early as to-morrow I shall attend a meeting with them and I am sure that the subject raised by the hon. member will be discussed.

• (2220)

[English]

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I see the hon. parliamentary secretary is now in the House. May I have an answer to the points I raised earlier?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I gather it is the wish of hon. members that the hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Comtois) be recognized, and accordingly I now recognize him.

[Translation]

**Mr. J.-Roland Comtois (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, my apologies to my hon. colleague for being a few minutes late, but I was held up at the committee that is now sitting.

I merely want to say that it is not particularly useful to bring up the government programs one by one as the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) just did a while ago.

He said that the government should assign more money to LIP. It may be true, but I too could name you dozens of programs to which the government could allot more money.

The hon. member for Nickel Belt said that we should reduce the old age pensions, health benefits or the pensions to the blind to devote more money to LIP.

One of the problems the government has to face when it listens to suggestions from members of the opposition or even from its own members is that it hears on the one hand those who say that the government should do more and on the other hand those who say that the government should reduce taxes.

I think it is more useful and more realistic to consider government programs as a whole.

The local initiative program is part of the economic and fiscal policy of the government. The government lays down its priorities from suggestions coming from all sides.

I should remind the hon. member that the budget which the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) has promised to bring down very shortly will give him a good idea of the government's priorities for the years to come.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.