

Canada Pension Plan

I trust when this committee begins its proceedings and sittings it will do its best to reach unanimity. I have to admit that I doubt this. I have had some experience recently in a committee of the House of Commons. I had hoped then for unanimity, because I felt it would have meant so much to Canada as a whole. This was not to be achieved, however.

I would like to ask the minister this question, Mr. Speaker. I believe I asked her the question during the resolution stage. She did not reply then. I know we were anxious to get the motion through a week ago today, and I am not criticizing her for not replying then; but I hope she replies when she closes the debate. I am wondering how long she is going to allow for study of the bill. Let us face it, Mr. Speaker, some members of the House of Commons have only had a copy of the bill since last Thursday, as I understand it.

Mr. Churchill: That is right.

Mr. Monteith: I certainly think the bill should be available to those interested citizens of Canada, also, so they can examine it in detail. How long is the committee going to be given, or how long are the people of Canada going to be given to study the bill, prepare briefs and present them to the committee? We were in such a big hurry today to authorize the setting up of the committee. When are we going to give the people of Canada an opportunity to study this bill?

Mr. Lloyd: When you send it to the committee.

Mr. Monteith: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Lloyd) need not interject, either. He can get up and make his speech, just like the member for Kootenay East (Mr. Byrne). I was asking a question of the minister, and I think I asked it during the resolution stage. How long will the public of Canada be given to study this bill before the committee forces a deadline on it? How long are they going to be given to prepare briefs? When I asked the minister this question previously, she smiled rather benignly. I asked whether the committee was going to be in operation before Christmas. I ask this question again. Some preliminary work of the committee could be done before Christmas, and surely to goodness the people of Canada are going to be given an opportunity to study this most complex piece of legislation. I do not suppose there has been for a long time any piece of legislation that

[Mr. Monteith.]

has meant so much, not only to the recipients of pensions, those who are going to benefit under the bill, but to the whole citizenry of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Monteith: All right. I further ask, Mr. Speaker, when the people of Canada are to be given the chance to study this 85-page, 125-sections bill. Are they not to be given this opportunity?

Mr. Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member has asked whether we are going to give the people of Canada an opportunity to study this bill. The hon. member was in his place today when the committee was established, and surely its function is clear.

Mr. Monteith: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what the hon. member for Halifax is talking about. It sounded to me like a program I saw on television last night, which was called "Candid Camera". It was a bunch of gobble-dygook, or whatever it is called. The hon. member's remarks could not have meant any more than that. The minister, in her introduction on second reading, sounded good, I admit; but really it was so technical. I am not blaming her for that; it would have to be technical, on a bill of 125 sections and 85 pages. How could it be other than technical? I would mention in passing that this is a bill of four parts. Part I has divisions A to E; part II has divisions A to G; part III is administration, and part IV amendments to the Old Age Security Act. I am not a lawyer, but I doubt very much whether there is an expert lawyer in Canada today who could have analysed this bill between last Thursday, when it was received by most hon. members, and today. I think this is another illustration of the deplorable handling of house business by the government. I insist that this bill needs a great deal of detailed study.

I am very pleased that the minister is going to be buttressed by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gordon) and the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Benson). I see the Minister of National Revenue in the offing. No doubt they are going to make very worthy speeches, one as to how he is going to collect the money and the other as to how it is going to be possible to spend the money. This is the sort of thing they will be speaking about. It will all make a pretty good argument, I am not denying that; and I am really very pleased that the minister should have this assistance. The minister did mention that the