

Mr. CANNON: We cannot prevent it. We cannot prevent a provincial legislature from amending or abrogating its own laws. It is to be presumed that the provincial governments will always consider their legislation in the light of public interest; we can assume that none of them will bring in legislation without that consideration in mind. If they did, the constitutional check is there; there is always the electorate to see that any government that is derelict in its duty shall not remain in power.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: The minister stated that it might be necessary or advisable later on to bring about certain modifications in this act. I should like to know what the procedure would be in case we find that modifications are necessary. Would it be necessary to obtain the consent of each province that was coöperating? Would there be any difficulty in obtaining such modifications as were found necessary within the next ten years?

Mr. CANNON: Section 5 says that no change in such scheme shall be made by the province without the consent of the governor in council. The proposition could be reversed, and it could be said that we would not be allowed to make any change without the consent of the provinces.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: It will be like the laws of the Medes and Persians, incapable of change—at least for ten years.

Mr. HEAPS: We have to get the consent of the nine provinces.

Mr. CANNON: We can change the conditions of any agreement entered into, but the parties to the agreement would have to consent.

Mr. HEAPS: Suppose the government thought it desirable to make certain changes in the act, would it be necessary to call together the provinces which are party to the agreement? If six provinces are favourable to the change and three are not, what would be the position then?

Mr. CANNON: The whole basis of the act is section 3, which says:

The governor in council may make an agreement with the lieutenant governor of any province.

So that we will have an agreement as between the Dominion and each province, and we cannot change the conditions of that agreement without the consent of the parties to it. There is no doubt about that.

[Mr. McGibbon.]

Mr. BENNETT: I am very glad the Solicitor General agrees more or less with the observations I made the other evening, that the weakness of the legislation is that it endeavours to impose upon the provinces the will of this parliament willy nilly, and I had not expected when I made the observations that one of the law officers of the crown would so soon agree with what I said.

Mr. CANNON: I do not see it.

Mr. BENNETT: Look at section 5, which says:

Before any agreement made pursuant to this act comes into operation the governor in council shall approve the scheme for the administration of pensions proposed to be adopted by the province, and no change in such scheme shall be made by the province without the consent of the governor in council.

That is clear. Then look at section 8. Section 8 declares what must be in the agreement before it is made. So that antecedently the provinces are restricted and controlled before they are allowed to make an agreement. Section 8 says:

Provision shall be made for the payment of a pension to every person who, at the date of the proposed commencement of the pension:—

(a) is a British subject; or, being a widow, was such before her marriage;

(b) has attained the age of seventy years.

And so on. Then subsection (2) says:

The receipt of a pension shall not by itself constitute a disqualification from voting at any provincial or municipal election.

Neither the provinces nor the cities are any longer permitted to determine what shall be the qualifications of those who exercise the provincial or municipal franchise, and this Dominion has said antecedently that all those conditions must be in the agreement. What the Solicitor General has said I believe to be sound, namely, that it is not proper for the Dominion to antecedently determine what the provinces must do, and we have said here that the province must agree to these conditions or there will be no agreement and no pensions. We have gone so far as to say that although the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan may enact that certain indigent persons shall not have the right to vote, this parliament shall dominate the provincial legislatures and declare that the receipt of the pension shall not prevent the persons from having a vote, whatever the province may desire. I pointed that out last year. I now ask the hon. member from Winnipeg, who is an astute lawyer, if we have not declared antecedently that there can be no