

The Chairman: This question is somewhat out of order.

Senator Flynn: Well, it is not out of order, since I admit it is not his responsibility.

The Chairman: You have answered the question.

Senator Flynn: I may have answered the question, but he has also agreed the answer was there.

[Text]

Senator Martin: May I ask another question?

Senator Phillips: I do not get a chance, Mr. Chairman, do I?

The Chairman: I gave you a chance, but unfortunately your leader preceded you.

Senator Martin: May I ask whether you could squeeze another day, Dr. Willard? You said May 19 was the day given to you. Would there be a possibility of squeezing another day or other days?

Dr. Willard: It is quite clear to us, Mr. Chairman, that the 19th is the deadline. We need this weekend to work on it. When we were asked to give a date, we gave it on the basis that if they wanted a June cheque, if they wanted the increased rates to go out in a June cheque, this was the deadline within which we would have to work. We cannot reverse the process. We have already started to get our staff to do the things they can do, to start on changes of rates for the plates, and so on. If we get halfway in the process and the legislation is held up and that part has to be reversed, and we can get ourselves so mixed up that we will be in the situation that unemployment insurance got itself into, and that is what we want to avoid.

Senator Martin: The unemployment insurance got itself in the position where it was not able to deliver cheques when the people had a right to receive them. Is that the point?

Dr. Willard: Yes, senator. With this kind of case load the switchboards get jammed very quickly, and the number of people that write in overburden the administrative capacity. There are different rates to be taken into account. For instance, take the single OAS?GIS rate; it is \$45 for the retroactive feature January to March; it is \$24.60 for the retroactive period April to May; then it is the \$150 for the regular June cheque. That comes to \$219.60. Our publicity has to bring this kind of thing out, in both the inserts and the newspapers. This is the kind of administrative problem we face.

Senator Martin: What is the last day in May for the advertising?

Mr. Bergevin: For the advertising we intend to use the last three days of the month, at the very time the pensioners receive their cheques, because they will not understand why they do not get the cheque immediately. cheque immediately.

Dr. Willard: They will wonder why the May cheque does not reflect what is being discussed here.

Senator Martin: Is that the usual practice?

Dr. Willard: That is the practice we have followed in the past. As you know, I have been deputy since 1960 and have gone through this process many times. The bee is always on the administrator to come through, and we have come through for the Parliament of Canada time and again. We are trying to do it this time, and all we ask is co-operation. Otherwise, let us pay the cheque in July.

Senator Martin: And if you do not have this bill you will not be able to pay the cheques in June?

Mr. Bergevin: That is correct.

Senator Flynn: That is what you have heard.

The Chairman: Senator Cameron.

Senator Phillips: O.K., I am written off, if that is your wish.

The Chairman: No, no, you are first.

Senator Phillips: I have a number of questions, Mr. Chairman. The witness—I am sorry, I have forgotten the name.

Mr. Bergevin: Bergevin.

Senator Phillips: Mr. Bergevin, you said you started negotiations several weeks ago with IBM and they gave you a final date of May 19. At what specific time did you begin negotiations with IBM?

Mr. Yeomans: The answer is the day after the budget was read. I, like a lot of other people, heard it that evening, and thought, "Oh, my gosh!"

Senator Langlois: That is an honest answer.

Senator Phillips: A lot of people have said that. Do you expect me to believe that you began your negotiations with IBM no earlier than the date of the budget?

Mr. Yeomans: I had no idea there was any change being planned, none whatsoever.

Senator Phillips: Mr. Chairman, I have had your assurance in the Senate this evening that we would have people called. I should like to have the IBM president, or a vice-president, summoned to ask if they did not begin earlier than May 19.

Senator Martin: Mr. Chairman, I do not think any such undertaking was given at all by you or anyone.

The Chairman: No.

Senator Martin: These witnesses have made a statement. These are public servants. They are public servants in whom, I am sure, we all have great confidence. They have said that unless these dates were respected it would not be possible to have the June cheques issued in that period. Now, that is the statement made by these public servants, whose word we would accept. Surely it is not fair to them to give the impression that what they are saying does not represent the situation.

That being the case, I think that it is clear that they have established, beyond any peradventure, the situation which they alone are in a position to speak about. They have told us that if the cheques in June are to be issued, the deadline