

Canada Pension Plan

able to retain their values, their moral code and at the same time be productive citizens. The people of the groups I have mentioned are among the finest farmers. They work the soil of Canada and make it produce. They bring forth good crops from the providence which has been given to all of us.

The fact that their basic tenets of religion are different from ours I think makes it all the more important that the state recognize their right to differ. The Hutterites and Mennonites are conscientious objectors in terms of war. They adhere very rigidly and strictly to the injunctions against killing. Some of us have an entirely different background. My family got over on this side of the water because we had fought a war which we lost, which Bonnie Prince Charlie, our leader, lost. We were brought over here without any great kindness by the victor of that war, a man very properly called Stinky Willie, the Duke of Cumberland. So our position is different, but surely it is our right and proper duty to respect a different tradition.

I think in countries that are thoughtfully democratic we recognize that even the right to bear arms need not be forced upon people. A well known statesman of Great Britain, Prime Minister Clement Atlee, carried to the very end his view that he would not bear arms. I commend him for his view, although not sharing it. What should be remembered by people in the country is that while the groups mentioned here have a certain view on such things as involvement in insurance, these people, unique I believe among most Canadians, do not draw from the welfare payments made available by the state. It should not be forgotten that while the Hutterites pay income tax, land tax and all sorts of taxes, you will not find them accepting or receiving such things as family allowance cheques or old age security cheques. In my opinion they deserve for that great credit.

● (1530)

I think it is only reasonable that the adjustment which has been made in this bill should be carried through. I share with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre the belief—here I am paraphrasing him perhaps somewhat roughly—in the value of universality. You make a better pension plan if you have a broad basis of participation. But, as he also mentioned, the question of freedom of religion is very high in importance, if not paramount, in the kind of values that are at the heart, core and centre of our parliamentary system, our system of basic freedoms and individual rights.

Beyond that, in a working society in a country such as ours we have to make pragmatic judgments. I suppose you could argue that under the Canada Pension Plan a whole province has been exempted because it was discovered a few years ago that the province of Quebec was working out in fact a better plan than the Government of Canada. I remember those very tense days. I was here at the time and I know what the then prime minister, Mr. Pearson, was going through. It was not an easy situation.

So we developed a parallel system. The Canada Pension Plan was improved because of some of the borrowings from the concepts which the Quebec plan had brought forward. If I remember rightly, it was the premier of the province of my colleague from St. John's East who the

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

first time he saw the Quebec plan at a dominion-provincial conference said that that was the plan for them rather than the federal one. So the idea of making adjustments, as against total universality—I suppose universality is always total—is not one that disturbs me. I look upon this not only as the right and proper thing to do but as a pragmatic settlement of a situation which had been growing difficult.

I know the depth of feelings that these people have; my colleague the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) and my colleague the hon. member for Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo have told me about it. I know how long these people have pled their case, how carefully and thoughtfully they have put it forward, and I would like them to know that I am delighted that they have been given this measure of adjustment, this reasonable acceptance of their reasonable proposition.

I would like them to know, also, that while some of their basic viewpoints on religious and social grounds are quite different from mine, I believe they deserve tremendous respect from the people of Canada for their fidelity to different mores, a different sense of values and different social customs. I would say that the people mentioned in this bill are fine Canadian citizens who made a great positive contribution to this country and who, if I may mention it, very rarely if ever show up negatively by, for instance creating any trouble in our society. I have never found these people to have been an embarrassment through the violation of laws or the codes of the rest of society. They are, in fact, good citizens. The economic system they have worked out is a commendable one. Some of the family arrangements which they make are in my judgment not only commendable, but I wish that more of us and more of our ancestors had been able to adhere to them in a meaningful and functional way.

So I close by saying that I welcome this piece of legislation. If I had things to criticize, I would have no difficulty in uttering the criticism. But this is a good measure. It is justice somewhat delayed, but justice none the less, and for it I stand and to it I will give my support.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo-Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, may I say first of all how great a pleasure it is to follow the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) with his beautifully wise, intelligent and civilized approach to a subject. Perhaps I say that only because I happen to concur in the point of view he has expressed, but I think I would say it on other occasions as well.

This is a most important time for me. There have been many people in the House of Commons, from all parties, who have tried to put the cause of the Old Order of Mennonites before the House in order to grant them an exemption, but I was the one who originated the private member's bill which for the last five years has been appearing on the order paper. I have been working with various people in the House in order to see this particular amendment come before the chamber and, I hope passed.

There are two really important aspects to this bill beyond the particular arguments of the Mennonites. The first is that it is an example of a private member's bill that