

Hon. John J. Connolly: Honourable senators,—

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, I must advise honourable senators that if the honourable Senator Connolly speaks now, it will have the effect of closing the debate.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): Honourable senators, we have had a most interesting afternoon. I, for one, regret that this bill came to us so late because, while I think there has been agreement by and large on the need for the principle embodied in this bill to be translated into legislation, I think there may be much misunderstanding on the part of individual critics of the bill of some of the details.

First of all, let me say to Senator Grosart that I am sorry about the surprise he expressed when he suggested that before a measure of this kind was presented to Parliament there should have been consultation with the provinces to ensure that they would not reduce payments they were going to make in the light of prospective payments that could be made under this bill. I take exception to this suggestion, not on any personal or political grounds, but simply on constitutional grounds. I have already, for good reason, read Section 94A of the B.N.A. act into the record. I shall read it again:

94A. It is hereby declared that the Parliament of Canada may from time to time make laws in relation to old age pensions in Canada, but no law made by the Parliament of Canada in relation to old age pensions shall affect the operation of any law present or future of a Provincial Legislature in relation to old age pensions.

To me that means that the province has the clear power, as has the federal authority, to legislate and operate in this field. And if some of the provinces desire to supplement old age security payments while others do not, this is a capacity they have under the Constitution of the country. That is the only point, I assure Senator Grosart, with which I was concerned. The federal Government has responsibility for legislating on a national basis with a view to establishing national standards and that motive has prevailed in much of the social legislation the federal Government has put on the statute books. Now to go to the provinces and say, "If we do this, will you keep yours going?" is not, in my view, a valid principle

upon which the federal Government should direct its work in this field.

However, I would remind honourable senators that this bill first came to the public notice in the summer, and there have been federal-provincial meetings since then. The provinces were all aware of the provisions in this measure. Certainly the bill was available to them. I want to assure Senator Grosart this is not a personal matter; I look upon it as a matter of some substance based upon the jurisdiction of Parliament.

Senator Phillips asked me a direct question. He asked why, if under the medical care legislation it is required that 90 per cent increasing to 95 per cent of the population be covered, some similar standard should not be applicable in this bill. In answer, let me say at first that I feel it is difficult to compare the two. Perhaps it is not quite the same as comparing apples and oranges, but as far as medical care is concerned, I think the federal Parliament in legislating in this field should try to cover as much of the population as it can. Secondly, from the point of view of spreading the risk, it is desirable that it should do so. That is a very important aspect. I would point out also to Senator Phillips that potentially under this bill every pensioner, if he was poor enough to qualify, could receive 100 per cent coverage. Of the 900,000 to be affected immediately, there may be many who will not qualify for any part of the supplement. Others will qualify for varying amounts.

Hon. Mr. Brooks: May I at this stage ask the honourable leader a question which I would have asked in committee if the bill had gone there. How was the figure of 900,000 arrived at?

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): I understand that this is the estimate by the department of the people who will qualify in some measure under this legislation.

Hon. Mr. Brooks: They may receive anything from \$1 to \$30.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): Yes.

Hon. Mr. Benidickson: Will this be done by computer?

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): That method has not been brought in at the moment. I understand it is hoped the computer system will be introduced to facilitate the work.

Hon. Mr. Brooks: I am sorry to interrupt the leader's line of thought, but I think he