

Canada Pension Plan

to place our people in a position where they are going to be treated fairly and equitably in this regard.

We have before us, Mr. Chairman, the resolution. We also have before us the white paper which was distributed today. We have listened to the statement made by the Minister of National Health and Welfare. But I believe it is essential that we get the bill before us in order that we have the opportunity of properly judging the measure and assessing its value. Therefore we will reserve any comments until the bill is before us.

[Translation]

Mr. Perron: Mr. Chairman, obviously at the resolution stage we cannot raise all the objections nor make all the suggestions which are called for in the case of such an extensive pension plan as the one which is proposed to us.

As far as the resolution before us is concerned, there was mention of a universal scheme; in other circumstances, it was suggested that it was a contributory pension plan and, finally, it can be said that, within a year, we shall probably be talking about a pension plan which would include the needy older people, in order to provide them at least with the basic necessities in an affluent country with a progressive economy and a productivity which has been rising constantly for the last 20 years.

Mr. Chairman, before raising some objections, I wish to put the record straight so that tomorrow or the day after or even later it will not be said that we are against security for older people or, if you like, that security which all Canadians are entitled to. As a matter of fact, if there are Canadians who deserve our attention, they are those who during 20, 30 and even 40 years worked here in our country to leave us the inheritance which we enjoy today in the field of productivity and which enables us to meet the needs of each and every Canadian.

Mr. Chairman, it is a fact that ever since the post-war period we have always been strong advocates of a generous pension plan for our older citizens. In fact, 20 or 25 years ago, when pensions amounted to \$35 or \$40 a month only, and when very few people were entitled to full benefits, we were advocating pensions of at least \$60 a month at age 60. As a supporting argument, we used to point out that automation would become a problem in 10, 15 or 20 years.

It was also our contention that our abundant production should be directed primarily towards local consumption.

Mr. Chairman, the fact that we put forth arguments against the resolution now before

[Mr. Patterson.]

us and the legislation which will follow does not mean that we are against a social security program for the aged. I rather think that it is simply a policy statement concerning this so-called universal, portable and contributory pension plan, because whatever name it is given, I am convinced that very few persons know what it is all about, even though a white paper concerning the pension plan was tabled this afternoon. I even suggest that nobody realizes fully the scope of the universal or contributory pension program which has been submitted for our consideration this afternoon. The white paper does not even mention the word "contributory".

I now turn to the press release which was sent to the ten provincial premiers by the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) on January 20, 1964 and which clearly stated the objectives of the pension plan to be considered by the twenty sixth parliament.

Under "coverage", dealing with the persons who can come under the plan, we read this:

It has been suggested that the plan could make it compulsory for a greater number of persons to be covered. Having examined the matter thoroughly, the federal government still believes that, at least at the beginning, the insurance should be optional for people working on their own account and a few categories of employees—

A little further on, it says:

In some countries, an almost universal insurance has been achieved by gradually extending the plan. The proposed Canada pension plan does not do away with the possibility of extending the compulsory insurance once the plan has been in force for some time.

A while ago the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) wondered whether one could describe the plan as universal or contributory, because the word "contributory" is not to be found in today's white paper. But I think the theory of this project necessarily includes the obligation. If there are old people who deserve our attention concerning these pensions, there are also young people who have to contribute to it and who also deserve our attention.

It is already recognized that a great number of people will not be able to participate in this pension plan immediately, because the existence of a private pension plan is recognized, as in the province of Quebec, where more than 30 per cent of the workers in permanent employment already participate in that pension plan on a contributory and voluntary basis for the employee and the employer.

If you consider, on the other hand, that 37 per cent of the labour force in Canada do not have a taxable income under the Income Tax Act, this means that 37 per cent