

*Pension Act and Other Acts*

ment, by bringing in its income security policy, had done wilful damage to the integrated security income plan that the Quebec government intended to implement. The right hon. Prime Minister, with his usual wisdom, tried to straighten out the situation. When at least three ministers of a Liberal government, on friendly terms with the present federal government, say they will resign because the Quebec policy was jeopardized by federal government action, I say there is a crisis, and this cannot be concealed by any statements made by the Prime Minister or the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro)—

**Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue):** Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member allow me a question?

**Mr. Asselin:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Caouette:** Mr. Speaker, I should not like the hon. members to believe I am standing in the hon. member's way. Not at all. I understand very well what he means by saying that the federal government wanted to thwart the provincial government's action.

What I should like to know is whether the hon. member can tell us why the Quebec government did not introduce its integrated guaranteed income plan before Ottawa introduced a measure to increase old age security pensions. Why does the Quebec government always have to wait for Ottawa to take the first step, and then criticize instead of falling into step and entering into a dialogue with the federal government? I want to know if the hon. member is aware of that?

**Mr. Asselin:** I am aware of it, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, I shall reply to the question the hon. member has just asked me. If he is willing to re-examine the Victoria proposals, as well as the position taken by the province of Quebec on social security, he will realize that the exclusive spending power of the federal government without consultation with the provinces was questioned. The provinces also have spending powers and they are at the end of their tether.

If the Canadian Confederation does not allow continuous consultations with the provinces about the spending power, how can the provincial government, which is much closer to the ordinary people, implement programs likely to relate to the family or the individual? Of course, my colleague who interrupted me just now will be unable to say that I am wrong when I say that the problems having to do with the family, with the individual, and especially with the Quebec community, concern the Quebec government rather than the federal government.

• (2040)

I also say this to my colleague: the Victoria proposals should all be revised to prove to what extent the Quebec government wanted then to have the tools required to achieve its objectives with regard to families and individuals.

When the party on my left claims to be in favour of the family unit, of the fulfilment of the individual, of wealth and society, as integral parts of a community such as that of Quebec, I ask myself no questions.

[Mr. Asselin.]

So I say that the federal government has the right, by virtue of the constitution, to increase old age pensions. As the Quebec premier said recently, that province is not a province like to the others. For Quebecers, Mr. Speaker,—

**An hon. Member:** Why?

**Mr. Asselin:** I will come to that.

For Quebecers, the government which is closest to the people, better qualified for governing and pursuing their objectives, is indeed the Quebec government. For the English-speaking provinces, it makes no difference whether it is the federal or the provincial government as those people do not have—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Caouette:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the hon. member to be honest in his statements. If there is a province that is willing to fight as much as Quebec to keep its jurisdiction, its rights, it is British Columbia, and there are others in Canada. In fact, each province wants as much freedom as it can get. At this point, I shall take the liberty of asking the hon. member another question.

When he says that the social question is a provincial jurisdiction, I agree wholeheartedly. But, what is stopping Quebec from applying its integral program, its guaranteed income program? What is stopping it from raising taxes? Instead of telling Ottawa: You raise the taxes and we shall spend them. Thus the people blame Ottawa for the taxes and commend Quebec for spending and increasing pensions.

**Mr. Asselin:** Mr. Speaker, I am taking note of my colleague's intervention. He would also like Quebec to continue to impose taxes, when people are already saturated with them.

**An hon. Member:** He knows it.

**Mr. Asselin:** Unless one applies a system which flies in the face of common sense, the Social credit system, we will never be able to manage it. I very much would like the hon. member to explain how such a system would work, either in Quebec or in Ottawa.

[English]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Would the hon. member resume his seat. Is the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Mather) rising on a point of order?

**Mr. Mather:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, a very brief one. I want to remind my colleagues from la belle province that we are supposed to be discussing matters related to veterans pensions. Interesting as their crossfire about Quebec is, I would urge them to keep to the immediate point, namely pensions. There are other members who would like to speak on this matter.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Surrey-White Rock has made a very good point. If there is any relevance in the remarks of the hon. member, it would have to be very broad and in reference to the whole social struc-