

*Canada Pension Plan*

that I am talking about only 20 per cent of the young people living in Hutterite colonies and that some who leave do return. Perhaps more will leave in the years ahead. If they do, they will be entering our communities with a severe handicap. Whether we acknowledge the handicap that we are indirectly placing upon these young people is one matter, but this is an obligation we cannot escape today.

It has been argued as well that if we allow certain groups within our Canadian community to be exempt from contributing to the Canada pension plan, we should allow other groups if they can justify the request in the sense that they are satisfied with their present standard of living and believe their young people will look after them in their old age. Why can we not allow these people to be exempt? I have always felt that the Conservative party has stood for the rights of the individual, that the individual was all supreme and should be allowed out of a scheme if he wants out. There should not be any compulsion to join.

However, I noted that in the committee the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) stated he believed that for the sake of the over-all effect of the pension plan, in order to be portable, it must include all people, but he felt that we should accept the application of these two bodies to be excluded from the Canadian community because contributing to it was against their religion. This argument is made from time to time, but it does not stand up. They can pay the premiums but they can never collect the pension unless they take out a social security number. If the department does not force them to take out a social security number, they do not take part in an insurance scheme, according to their way of thinking.

● (1610)

When the Mennonite people were before the committee they stated quite clearly that some of their members were tempted to pay the premiums and take advantage of the plan. One witness admitted that one of the members of the community in which he lived had, in fact, applied for and received the old age pension. However, this is against the teachings of their church and therefore that person either was asked to return it or to leave the church. There is no real record showing whether or not these people accept the security of insurance. No one can really tell because, in the application for family allowances or old age pensions, religious qualifications are not set out. So there is no record of whether or not they obtain insurance or welfare benefits. They are prepared to give out all the welfare they can but, because they are subject to receiving payments under the plan, they consider it to be insurance.

If they never take out a social security number, they cannot receive any payment, and therefore the contributions can be treated as welfare so far as they are concerned. The possibility exists for the members of those religious groups to leave their sheltered communities and join our society, at which time they can join the Canada Pension Plan. Once they enter the labour force, they automatically find themselves making contributions to the Canada Pension Plan and accepting our standard of living as well as our welfare security when they become disabled, of pensionable age, and so on.

[Mr. Horner (Crowfoot).]

It is interesting to note that in the province of Alberta the Hutterites make payments into the medical insurance scheme. So, the differentiation between welfare and insurance made by the Old Order of Mennonites who believe that taking out insurance is against their religion but accepting welfare is not, is not made by the Hutterites. This is one of the reasons I was disappointed when they were not called before the committee. I might point out that the Hutterites farm over one million acres of land in the province of Alberta alone. They have big farms and they make a separation between their religion and their business. As I pointed out previously, the Income Tax Review Board made a finding in a test case involving five Hutterite colonies. As recorded at page 19 of the judgment, the judge found the following:

I have reached the conclusion that the appellants were farmers in the full sense of the word.

So, in many respects they can be considered in our Canadian community as farmers, but they also try to keep their religion separate. Their whole lives evolve round the church, and they suggest that this bill goes against their religious beliefs. Members of the Old Order of Mennonites, when they were before the committee, pointed out that in their view there could be a separation between the church and the government and that this bill really causes the two to conflict. I should like to read the following section in the bill:

The Minister . . . is satisfied that the religious sect

(i) is a religious organization that has established tenets and teachings that oppose the acceptance of benefits from any private or public insurance . . .

As I pointed out, the Hutterites in the province of Alberta may take out medicare because their tenets and teachings are not necessarily opposed to that form of insurance. The section goes on to read:

(ii) does, as a practice, make provisions for the support of dependant members that are reasonable in view of their general level of living.

In some of his speeches made over the past few years, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) appeared to be saying that we must ensure in Canada a guaranteed annual income because a certain percentage of our population lives at an unsatisfactory level. He hopes to convince the other members of the cabinet some day that 30 per cent of our population, or whatever percentage Professor Bates, the secretary of the Welfare Council of Canada suggested, are in fact living at a lower than satisfactory standard of living. The minister suggested that everyone in our country deserves an adequate and fair standard of living. Yet, we have before the House a piece of legislation which sets aside a segment of our Canadian population which wants to continue to live their lives at a standard which could be compared to the standard of the nineteenth century or, I may even say, to the sixteenth century.

I think it is only fair to point out that we are speaking here of around 7,000 people in the province of Alberta, and I do not know how many thousands in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. We were told in the committee that this legislation would affect in the neighbourhood of 2,500 of Old Order Mennonites in the province of Ontario and 3,000 children in the same province. We are now saying to those