

● (1520)

Mr. McGrath: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang), in his capacity as acting government House leader, whether the government intends to bring forward measures to deal with the real problems facing this country such as rising food costs, rising shelter costs and rising transportation costs?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, if it is not possible to reach agreement right now to start this evening's debate at four or five o'clock, I wonder if it might be understood that if the House leaders reach such an agreement we can inter-vene in the debate this afternoon and start this evening's debate that much earlier. As far as we are concerned, we would be prepared to agree right now to start the debate at four or five o'clock.

An hon. Member: How about right now?

Mr. Lang: On that same point of order, Mr. Speaker, there may be some disposition to begin right now.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Lang: I see there is not disposition to begin right now, but we are ready to start at this time.

Mr. Bell: Let us start at four o'clock with time off for supper.

Some hon. Members: Right now.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

An hon. Member: We are ready.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

An hon. Member: Come on, let's start now.

Mr. Speaker: Could we have order, please.

Some hon. Members: Right now.

Mr. Speaker: I respectfully suggest to hon. members that it is very difficult to agree on this kind of an arrangement by way of interruptions from across the floor. I think there should be consultation, as I have suggested to hon. members. Obviously there is not unanimous agreement at the moment as to the time the debate might commence. I suggest there be the usual discussions, and I will call orders of the day.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask whether there has been any agreement to the effect that if the matter that is to be called now receives only an hour or two consideration the debate will be continued on a later date, since the debate is normally terminated at the completion of one day's discussion.

Mr. Speaker: I would again suggest to the hon. member that this might be another subject matter for the type of discussion I proposed a moment ago.

Canada Pension Plan
GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA PENSION PLAN

CONTRIBUTIONS OF MEMBERS OF CERTAIN RELIGIOUS SECTS, INTEREST RATE ON DELAYED PAYMENTS, PAYMENT OF LEGAL EXPENSES

The House resumed from Friday, July 20, consideration of the motion of Mr. Lalonde for the second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs of Bill C-190, to amend the Canada Pension Plan.

Mr. Speaker: My understanding is that we are resuming the debate on the motion now before the House, and that if the minister speaks now he will be closing the debate. I gather there are other hon. members who want to take part in the discussion. That being the case, the Chair will recognize the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner).

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): Having regard to Bill C-190, Mr. Speaker, after a cursory look at it one feels there is not really much at stake and that it should receive ready passage. Perhaps a number of members of this House have adopted that view.

The Canada Pension Plan was created in essence for two basic reasons, the first of which was to create a universal plan which would be portable so that upon retirement a person would have something set aside. The bill before us deliberately exempts certain religious groups which had been formed prior to 1966. It is a well-known fact that people have various faiths, and that many cherish in their hearts their own religious beliefs. I would ask the minister why these religious organizations, in order to be exempt, must have been formed prior to 1966? Why is that the condition before they have the privilege of opting out of participation in the Canada Pension Plan? Why should we allow anyone to opt out?

It is also well known that many religious organizations do not retain all their following on a rigid basis, and that from time to time people do break with their church and choose another. What happens to a person who belongs to a religious faith which is exempt from contributions to the Canada Pension Plan, then breaks away from that organization and, at age 50 or 60, finds that no one has made any contribution to the Canada Pension Plan on his behalf? Such an individual would reach retirement age and have nothing. He would be solely dependent upon the old age security system, which is merely a base for retirement today as it is coupled with the Canada Pension Plan. For those reasons, I urge that this bill be not passed without a great deal of study.

Let me deal specifically with the Canada Pension Plan and why I do not think this bill should receive acceptance by this House. In 1966, the Canada Pension Plan was brought into being. The minister who piloted it through the House said it amounted to a tax levied by the government to bring about security for the people when they reached retirement age, and that the tax amounted to about a 23 per cent increase in the existing income tax rate. In other words, there was a choice of levying a premium solely for the purposes of the Canada Pension