

Baker) for us old codgers who are beyond the 60 mark. I believe that as he takes an interest in the subject he will realize that it is much more of an issue in the country than he seems to think it is.

I have listened to the arguments that it is unfair to retire people at 60, leaving them with nothing to do. I was not ready for retirement at 60, so I stayed right on; I may not be prepared for it at 70. But as I go about the country, as I meet the people whom I see, I find there are many thousands of people for whom the rat race today is too much. They want the opportunity to retire at 60. No one is suggesting that retirement should be compulsory, but the opportunity should be there and provision for it should be made by law under the Old Age Security Act and in the Canada Pension Plan.

I am prepared to sit down with the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate, social scientists and social workers in the field and discuss with them the problems associated with retirement. But I would point out that these problems are not solved by trying to stave them off. I am confident that with the coming of increased automation and cybernation, working years in the future will be fewer than they have been in the past. If people are forced to work until they are 65, it is even harder for them to make an adjustment than if they are able to retire at the age of 60.

I am glad to note the interest of the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate in this subject. I hope he will pursue this interest and that before long he will make speeches containing answers to the questions he has raised. I do not believe I have ever talked out a bill or a motion put forward during private members' hour, and I do not intend to do so on this occasion, but I would like to take a minute or two to join the hon. member for Trinity and the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate in suggestion that there are other factors involved in the pension picture. If I might be permitted to digress for a few moments, Mr. Speaker, it just so happens that I received notice today that my question No. 16, which has been on the order paper since the beginning of this session, has been answered. So if anyone happens to read my speech in *Hansard*, I suggest that he turn to question 16 in the early part of the issue where he will find a series of questions and answers regarding private pension plans and escalation.

● (1750)

My hon. friend across the way said that only 40 per cent of the work force was covered by private plans, and he is substantially correct. I think the work force is of the order of six million or so, and according to the answer given me today, the number of persons enrolled in private pension plans is 2,822,000. So the figures are in the same ball-park. But here is the significant feature, as anyone can see by using the figures given in answer to my question No. 16. Of those persons who are enrolled in private pension plans, 93 per cent are in plans providing no escalation of benefits after retirement. Of the other 7 per cent, 5 per cent have an escalation limited to 2 per cent a year. That adds up to 98 per cent, leaving only 2 per cent of the people enrolled in private pension plans with an escalation providing for 3 per cent or more. So there is one of the real problems about retiring persons at age 60. If their pensions

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are fixed, and stay fixed for the rest of their lives, the going gets pretty tough for them.

It is good that old age security and the Canada Pension Plan are being indexed and that the pensions of retired public servants and armed forces and RCMP personnel are also indexed. But with all these workers in our economy not getting any escalation of their pension, the situation gets tough for them as the years go on. The answer to that situation, if I may say so to my hon. friend across the way, is not to oppose voluntary retirement at 60; the answer is to campaign not only for voluntary retirement at 60 but for provisions that call for the escalation of all pension plans in Canada.

Mr. J. Larry Condon (Middlesex-London-Lambton): Mr. Speaker, I rise for the first time since I have been in this parliament to speak as an expert on this particular subject. The hon. member who proposed the motion mentioned the dedication of nurses, their obedience and self-discipline, and I must say that that is very true. My wife, Carol, is a nurse and I well understand the time and effort that she has put into her training at St. Michael's Hospital. During the last 16 years she has put in much time and effort to benefit people other than herself. I say that if you equate money with dedication, nurses should go to the top of the list. They are a very dedicated group and I hope their dedication will continue even though Ontario has changed its training system. In the old days, nurses went to training school, worked sometimes 12 hours a day and perhaps got one day a week off. Certainly they were unable to enjoy the social amenities enjoyed by nurses today during their three-year training period.

The motion presented by the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers) strikes me as being so manifestly in contradiction with the very principles of social justice that I am somewhat concerned that the hon. member would make such a proposal. When governments develop social security policies and, more so, when governments are in the process of planning social security changes, a most important consideration they must bear in mind is the equity of the measures they propose to introduce. I am talking about equity in the sense of avoiding discrimination by setting varying eligibility conditions and benefits based on artificial distinctions such as sex, which may be unrelated, or by occupation, which may be totally irrelevant. In other words, governments must strive to achieve equal treatment such as was recently demonstrated by the joint federal-provincial agreement to remove from Canada Pension Plan benefits sexually based differences: hence the position of the Government of Canada toward different retirement ages for men and women which would constitute discrimination.

If agreement is reached as to the validity of these principles, how then could the members of this House endorse the motion of the hon. member for Red Deer which advocates early retirement for female registered nurses at age 60 with full rights to draw appropriate Canada Pension Plan benefits together with old age security? Such provisions would be discriminatory against men—which, speaking as a man, I certainly do not want—discriminatory against other women and, indeed, would be discriminatory against registered nurses themselves, as I shall attempt to illustrate hereafter.