

Canada Pension Plan

me at all, because the point is this: If the province of Quebec intends to set up its own pension scheme, why should the federal parliament or the Minister of National Health and Welfare decide to number all Canadian citizens, when Quebec will have officially and definitely its own pension plan?

It is out of the question, for Ottawa, to know how many Smiths there are in Quebec, how many Smiths in Smiths Falls or how many Smiths in Manitoba.

What must Quebec do with its plan? Will the province still have to supply information to the federal department?

If the province of Quebec decides to have its own plan, it seems very logical to me that the federal minister should not interfere with what is going on in the province of Quebec.

Why, then, number the residents of the province of Quebec with those of the other provinces, since the province of Quebec wants to number its own citizens?

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): Mr. Chairman, I think I can answer the question of the hon. member for Villeneuve. At this time, in the province of Quebec, workers register with the same series of unemployment insurance numbers as the workers in the rest of the country—

Mr. Caouette: That does not concern the pension plan.

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): Exactly the same number will serve for the pension plan: the social insurance number.

That series of numbers was offered the province of Quebec by the federal government, and Quebec accepted it to facilitate the integration of workers moving from one province to another.

The province of Quebec may use that series of numbers if she wants to, but she is entirely independent and free to accept it or not.

In my opinion, it may not be essential but the use of the same series of numbers would greatly facilitate the movement of workers from one province to another.

Mr. Caouette: Could the minister's assistant tell me when the province of Quebec asked to use the same unemployment insurance numbers?

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): I say that this block of numbers was offered to the province of Quebec. The province did not ask for it but

[Mr. Caouette.]

it was offered to the province, which could have accepted it or not.

Mr. Caouette: When did the province accept it?

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): I think it is when we enacted legislation concerning a block of numbers for social insurance purposes, at the time of the negotiations which resulted in the standardization of the pension plans.

Mr. Caouette: Could the minister's assistant tell me exactly in which manner the two plans became identical?

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): Following lengthy negotiations. I wonder whether the hon. member for Villeneuve was not yet in Canada—

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a question of privilege. The member for Villeneuve is always in Canada; I am wondering whether the hon. member for Longueuil is in Canada at present when he says the province of Quebec has received offers. I am asking him when the province of Quebec had offers from the federal government and when it accepted them?

[Text]

Mr. Benson: Mr. Chairman, the province of Quebec has not passed its pension legislation yet. The government of Canada has the numbers which we have accumulated under the Unemployment Insurance Act and, incidentally, they are bilingual numbers. We have simply indicated to the province of Quebec as a matter of co-operation, which I think is vitally important in Canada, that these numbers can be made available to them if they want to use them. If the province of Quebec decides to pass its legislation and to use Roman numerals or perhaps numbers in Latin or German they are perfectly at liberty to do so. But we have the numbers. We are offering them to the province of Quebec and it is up to the province of Quebec whether or not, within their own rights, they legislate to use these numbers.

[Translation]

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Chairman, I would readily understand the intervention of the Minister of National Revenue, but we are wondering whether the pension plan comes under the Department of National Revenue, the Department of National Health and Welfare or some other department; we do not know. However, I fully appreciate that the Minister of National Revenue would express satisfaction with the interim report on Canadian bilingualism and biculturalism, for the