

*Adjournment Debate*

• (1820)

In the meantime, Canada's negotiators in Geneva continue to press the case.

## PENSIONS

**Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East):** Mr. Speaker, last night the House of Commons defeated an opposition motion to dissolve Parliament and to call an election.

When that vote took place and in the debate that took place prior to the vote, it took me back to the days immediately prior to the general election of 1988.

It will be recalled at that time the election was fought principally on one issue, the issue of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. Underlying that issue was a concern that Canadians had about our social safety network, our social security system, a system that is made up of medicare, unemployment insurance, old age security and by the Canada Pension Plan.

The free trade agreement has now been in effect for over three years and we still have a secure social safety network in place and the concerns and fears that people had hopefully have been dissipated.

Part of that social safety net is the Canada Pension Plan. A key part of the Canada Pension Plan is the disability pension provisions of that plan.

Up until last February, just two short months ago, the Canada Pension Plan disability pension provision had a limitation period in it which prevented people who had legitimately paid into that plan for years and years from claiming the disability pension that was rightfully theirs.

It was perhaps because of the fact that they had applied too late. They had applied too late in some cases because they did not know that there was such a provision. In other cases it was because they did not want to admit that they were disabled. In other cases it was because they just did not want to draw financially on the fund. They held off until it was too late. In fact, as the facts shows, there are some 4,000 cases of this sort holding right now where they were late applications, too late to get their benefits under the Canada Pension Plan disability pension, and some 900 new cases are added each and every year.

Fortunately Parliament corrected that problem but it was not easy. I along with others asked questions for

years and only received promises. Finally, I introduced Private Member's Bill C-280, which a committee of Parliament agreed at first would be votable and another committee said it was not votable, but then the House of Commons itself finally agreed by unanimous consent to pass that bill. It was ultimately ruled out of order by the Speaker of the Senate. The government had to introduce its own bill. It went through and has now received Royal Assent, but we still need the provinces to implement regulations to put those amendments in place.

In the meantime, applications are pouring in from former late applicants to receive the benefits they are rightfully entitled to.

What we need now is to make sure that the provinces have passed those regulations and that this act is the law of the land.

I would like to ask tonight when the minister will bring in this long overdue amendment and finally make it the law of the land with the provincial regulations in place? When will the final barrier to fairness and equity in the disability pension provision of the Canada Pension Plan finally be torn down?

**Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-57 replaces the Private Member's bill sponsored by the hon. member for Don Valley East which was Bill C-280. The Senate did find his bill inadmissible because it was not accompanied by a royal recommendation, as is required in the case of legislation involving taxes or public spending. Bill C-57 pursues the same goals and basically targets the same group as Bill C-280, and I am referring to late applicants for disability benefits.

Under the provisions of Bill C-57, any disabled person who could have applied for and received a disability benefit will retain the right to a benefit no matter how long it takes to apply. It still will be important for a person to apply as soon as possible after becoming disabled. There are and there will continue to be limitations on retroactive award of all benefits paid under the Canada Pension Plan. Bill C-57 respects the intent of the hon. member's private bill, that is to rescue those several thousands of Canadians paying the very stiff penalty of the loss of a pension for simply applying late. Also Bill C-57 does other things. He is quite right; we do need provincial agreement to move forward.