

Canada Pension Plan

the future, to opt out. At that stage, we would have a hodge-podge.

I am suggesting that if we pass something here we should give a guarantee to those who become a part of this plan that whatever may happen in the future the method of payment and the reasons for payment of benefits will be safeguarded. In other words, if I live in Alberta, British Columbia or Quebec and I move out of the province to another province which does not have the Canada pension plan, then would I be guaranteed by the federal government, not the province, that all those contributions which I had made would be paid to me according to the rules under which I had paid them? Portability is of the essence in this plan. I know the minister agrees with me, but if the legislation is surrounded by words like "presumably", "we hope" and all these other nice things, if it will not stand the test of time then I think we should allow the clause to stand and have another look at it. We should guarantee that portability will be an essential ingredient of the Canada pension plan.

Mr. Benson: I could refer my hon. friend to subclause (3) of clause 114 with which we are dealing, which requires that if and when a province decides to move out of the Canada pension plan—I assume he will allow me to say "if and when" in this connection—it must assume the obligations which have accrued under the Canada pension plan. If a province in the future decides to move out, it must provide a plan that will pay the benefits to which a person would have been entitled under the Canada pension plan. If it fulfils this condition, then we will turn over the funds to this particular province.

My friend seems worried about the benefits being lost. The benefits will not be lost because we will require the province to fulfil this obligation at that particular time. If the province changes the plan subsequently to provide additional benefits or assume additional obligations, and a person then moves back into a province which is under the Canada pension plan, he would have to get two cheques on his retirement. There would not be complete portability because the benefits would differ under the two plans. What this plan does assure is that people who have built up benefits under this plan will get those benefits because of the requirement that before a province can get out it must provide in its plan for similar benefits.

With regard to portability and a person getting a single cheque, which my hon. friend has indicated is of concern to him, this will

be the case as between Quebec and the Canada pension plan. Presumably, and I must use the word "presumably", it would also be the case if any other province opted out. However, supposing a different province opted out of the Canada pension plan by giving due notice and by saying that it will accept the obligation to pay benefits that are required under the Canada pension plan, but that it later changed the benefits within that particular province while the benefits under the Canada pension plan remained the same and that no agreement was reached to transfer funds back and forth, then one of its contributors living within a province under the Canada pension plan, on his retirement, might get two cheques.

Mr. Pugh: I just want to follow this up because I am not quite satisfied. One of the factors in connection with labour in Canada today is its mobility. Labour can move from one province to another at will. In other words, labour goes from job to job wherever there is work. If we had one Canada pension plan, we would have no trouble because the same plan would be in effect in each and every province. We know today that one province, Quebec, is not going to come into this plan. We do not know what will happen in the future. Alberta might have a plan of its own and British Columbia might have a plan.

The minister mentioned that I was concerned about one cheque being paid to a person. I am not interested in whether or not he gets one cheque or ten cheques, although it may be preferable to get one cheque. The point in which I am interested is this: A man may move to two or more provinces, perhaps as many as five provinces during his working life. The Minister of National Health and Welfare has said that there might only be portability within a province. I can only assume from that the plan might not be good elsewhere. Does the Canada pension plan pick up the tab for any lack of portability?

Miss LaMarsh: The Canada pension plan would not pick up the tab for this. Let me make this very clear. This parliament only has certain rights under the British North America Act. We are exercising those rights under this legislation. So long as the Canada pension plan applies in a province, then pensions will be portable across the whole of this country. If there is another province, such as the province of Quebec, which has comparable legislation, which is prepared to enter into an agreement, then it will be portable right across the country. If a province, under