

Suggested Reduction of Pension Age

Moreover, we could give them an adequate amount to meet their needs, without fear of spoiling them; we could provide them with free medical and dental care, free transportation on trains, and other services, in order that our senior citizens who toiled and moiled to develop the country would be able to end their days with a modicum of comfort.

The motion says:

—without a means test—

This is a very important point because, without that, we would be unfair to those who succeeded with great difficulty in saving up a few dollars for their old age.

Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of the centennial we will celebrate shortly, I feel that the government should also think about another group of older people, those between 55 and 65. The government should do something for those people who, for one reason or another, cannot get a pension now and are unable to earn a living because of their physical condition.

Under the present plan, they are too young to get the old age pension and not disabled enough, under the law, to get the pension for the disabled. But those older citizens urgently need a pension just the same because of their poor health. In fact, do you know that a 50 year old man is sometimes in poorer shape than a 65 year old man in perfect health? Many factors are involved and the government should take them into account.

I urge the government to look after the welfare of those people and I trust that it will. There still remain a few years to improve the condition of those aged people, who are entitled to our respect and for whom we must do something on the occasion of the centennial of confederation. Through their work and intelligence, they have contributed to the development of this Canada in which we live and which we want to improve constantly in order to make it a truly wonderful country.

[Text]

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I think that the intent of the mover of this motion, as the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Olson) stated, is quite clear. However, I think that this motion as a good illustration of some of the general problems of private members' motions in relation to the conduct of the business of the house.

The mover has asked that the subject matter should be sent to a committee. The house has before it a piece of legislation to which it has given first reading, the Canada pension plan, which very specifically deals with retirement age. Listening to the remarks of the hon. member who moved the motion, it was

not clear to me which legislation should be specifically amended for the purpose he has in mind. Did he have in mind the reduction of the age under the federal Old Age Security Act, which is the pension now payable to all after they reach their 70th birthday? Is this the specific legislation he seeks to amend? If so, the Canada pension legislation will amend this legislation, specifically with regard to retirement age.

Mr. Barnett: Is the hon. member aware of the fact that this motion was on the order paper before we knew we were going to have a Canada pension plan?

Mr. Francis: I am perfectly aware of the timing of the resolution, but I am calling the attention of hon. members to the fact that the house has to deal in an orderly way with the business put before it. I would have thought, after a piece of government legislation had been laid before the house specifically dealing with the subject matter of this resolution, the mover of the resolution might have withdrawn it, or might have deferred seeking consideration of it until the house was in committee dealing with the Canada pension plan legislation.

If the government had not taken any initiative on this matter and had not presented any legislation to the house, then the hon. member would have been correct in presenting a private member's motion on the matter.

Mr. Knowles: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Francis: Certainly.

Mr. Knowles: In view of the fact that the government's pension legislation is presently being reviewed, so that we are in the dark as to what may come up, does he not think it a good idea to have a suggestion of this kind put forward at this time for consideration?

Mr. Francis: I thank the hon. member for his question because his questions are usually informative, but may I suggest the next implication of such a resolution is that it should not be implemented by unilateral action of this house. It should be the subject of discussion between the federal and provincial authorities, the very kind of discussion which I presume is taking place now, and which has taken place in recent months.

If the experience of the house on social legislation under our constitution means anything, and it must, I would have preferred the wording of a resolution which would have said something to the effect that the government should initiate discussions with the provincial authorities for appropriate amendments to the legislation now in force. This is not the wording of the resolution before us, and the adoption of this resolution would not

[Mr. Plourde.]