

do not see that this particular Bill will require too much debate because the arguments put forward in it make it self-evident that that information is required. It is not only self-evident from the Member's Bill, but from many contributions that have been made over past years on the need for this information.

Both the Hon. Member for Sudbury (Mr. Frith) and the Hon. Member for York-Scarborough referred to the report "Better Pensions for Canadians" that was put forward by the Committee on Pension Reform and tabled in the House in the last Parliament. Part of the report reads:

Plan sponsors could be required to make substantially more information available to pension plan members and their spouses. Employers could be required to provide data each year concerning the employee's accrued benefits and the financial status of the plan. Plan administrators could be required to make information available on the extent to which the fund covers pension liabilities, lists of assets, actuarial balance sheets, the present value of benefits earned to date and the like.

That, essentially, is the thrust of what this Bill would do if the House of Commons agrees to refer it to a committee where it can be thoroughly examined and before which Canadians can appear as witnesses to give testimony to the need for such legislation.

At the outset I said that this Bill was about information. I would like to go a bit beyond what the Bill talks about to a couple of other areas. The Hon. Member for Sudbury referred to a press report put out by Steve Kerstetter of Canadian Press a couple of weeks ago. It dealt with the lack of understanding that Canadians have of the pension system in the country. If you examine the pension system, you will find it is not surprising that that is the case. For many years our pension system has grown up as a hodgepodge of bits and pieces that senior citizens, upon retirement, can lay claim to. The need for pension reform has been debated at some length in the House and across the country ever since I came here in 1980.

On the question of information the Canadian Press story dealt with an internal poll that was commissioned by the present Government on the attitudes of Canadians toward their pension system. That poll, I rather suspect, led to some measures that were contained in the Budget affecting pensioners which we all know about. Certainly pensioners made their arguments to the Government in a very clear way. What the Government was trying to do to old age pensioners was totally mistaken or misinformed and they were not going to have any part of it.

I think that those elements in the May 23 Budget arose from that poll. It would have been very useful to Members of the House to have that information before them in order to do the job that we were elected to do in this place, that is, to look after the best interests of all Canadians including taxpayers and pensioners. I would not be interested, for example, if the information that we are talking about in this Bill were used to attack the principle of pensions. However, I do not think that is the intent of this Bill.

I think it would be extremely useful, not only to today's senior citizens, but to all those individuals who are looking forward to retirement over the next several years, to fully

### *Public Pensions Reporting Act*

understand how a pension system is structured. I would think that they may very well want to use the information that we are arguing for today in the House of Commons to seek even better pensions for Canadians who have given their lives to this country and who have every right to expect a decent, adequate standard of living upon retirement.

While we are talking about how much pensions cost and whether the country can afford them, perhaps we should go a bit further and obtain information that was not given to Members of Parliament such as the amount of taxes that are not collected through the tax expenditure account. For example, I would like to know how many Canadians are not paying their fair share of taxes each fiscal year and not sharing the wealth in the country so that we can do the proper thing for retired citizens and making sure that they do have an adequate system.

● (1720)

I am not one of those who agrees with some of the arguments we have heard in the House that our social services have become so expensive that they are unmanageable and we can no longer afford to deliver adequate social services to people who need that benefit which stems from the Parliament of Canada. I think the arguments we have heard in support of that are very woolly-headed and very often are devious to the point that they are advanced in order to save individuals who are not paying their fair share of taxes from accepting their responsibility to the elderly in this country.

I would like to see more information provided to the House on our total tax expenditure account so that we can examine that in relation to what we are paying for the old age pension, the Canada Pension Plan or some of the other benefits for which people have worked very hard over the years.

I do not intend to take too much time in this debate because I am anxious to see this Bill referred to a committee, as I hope it will be, where I will have more to say about the information we require. I simply want to congratulate the Hon. Member for York-Scarborough for giving us an opportunity to say a few words in the House about this matter.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to take part in this debate on Bill C-255 which basically aims at providing Members of Parliament and Canadians generally with the information they need to examine and evaluate our most important social program, namely the Canadian pension system, including the pensions paid to retired members of the Armed Forces, Members of Parliament, judges, federal public servants, members of the RCMP, and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I am especially happy about this debate since I have spent many years, at least ten, trying to obtain some figures from the Government and information about the amounts involved in the pension plans of public servants, members of the Armed Forces and the RCMP.