

Pension Legislation Delayed

I should like to stress this angle, that the whole question of getting our old age security on a good, firm, sound basis ought to be by means of combining a contributory plan with the flat rate benefit, and unless we do it at a time like this we are going to have to change the relationship, change the calculations, increase the old age security benefit again and go through the whole round with all the difficulties we have had.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that not only was this one of the major promises in the Liberal platform at the last election, but that it is the most important domestic issue that has been placed before parliament. As I say, it was put on the order paper back on the 20th or 21st of June and was first debated on the 18th of July. But now it stands waiting while the government tries to make up its mind whether it is just interested in the plan or whether it is really going to go ahead with it.

A good deal gets said in the course of all this about the position of the province of Quebec and the position of the province of Ontario. The federal government talks more about Ontario than it talks about Quebec, although Mr. Lesage is making it just as difficult to bring this plan into being as is Mr. Robarts. But I should like to make the point that Mr. Robarts' statements have been pretty clear. There was a real fight over this matter in the recent Ontario election and an attempt was made to cast Mr. Robarts in the role of being an opponent of the Canada pension plan. Maybe in some respects he was. Maybe he preferred his plan. But since the election he has given a clear indication that if the Canada pension plan is going to be brought in his government will delay the implementation of the portable pension plan proposed for Ontario. But he has said that if the Canada pension plan is not put through at this session, if it is shelved, then Ontario will have no option but to bring in its plan and to provide for it to become effective perhaps in 1965.

It seems to me that is not a threat on the part of Mr. Robarts. I am the last person in the house who feels any need to defend Mr. Robarts, but I suggest we need to look at this thing fairly. He has not posed any threat. As a matter of fact, he has left the door open for the federal government to bring in its plan at this session. He is trying to hurry the federal government along. I understand that the Ontario government has named its members to a committee to discuss the technical aspects of the whole business with the federal government, and it seems to me that so far as public representatives are concerned, so far as the public view is concerned, the time is ripe for the plan to be proceeded with at this session of parliament.

I urge, Mr. Speaker, that we do not continue to be given these "as soon as possible" answers, that we do not continue to be told that the government is merely interested and, above all, I suggest that the government must not use the excuse that it cannot get on with this business because the house does not deal with other matters as expeditiously as it would like. As I pointed out when I put a question to the Prime Minister the other day, there are 20 or 25 items of business on the order paper. When house business is announced there are never more than four or five referred to. There are another 15 or 20 that are never suggested. We may get some light on the government's intentions on Monday, but so far we have no list of priorities. We feel this subject should be given top priority and that there should be no further delay in assuring the house that it will be proceeded with at this session.

I am prepared to hear the government say that the motion cannot be proceeded with until after the federal-provincial talks have been held in the month of November, but there is no question but that this session of parliament is going to last quite a bit longer than that. I think we are all assuming we will be here pretty well up to Christmas eve, if not longer, and I think we should have the positive assurance of the government that as soon as the November talks are over this plan will be proceeded with.

Obviously some changes are going to have to be made. The resolution that is still on the order paper and which was debated on the 18th of July does not take into consideration the fact that a \$10 increase has now been made in old age security payments. It does not take into consideration the opting out that Premier Lesage has expressed on behalf of Quebec. These facts have got to be met. Let us have them met. Let us have a new resolution introduced. Let us have a new actuarial report similar to that excellent one prepared by the government actuary, so that we will have that picture up to date.

In my view the Minister of National Health and Welfare has done a good job in trying to answer attacks on the plan by the insurance companies. The speech that was made in her name in Toronto on Monday, September 30, by her parliamentary secretary, was an effective answer to the insurance companies' attacks on the plan. But in the meantime we read in the column in *Maclean's* magazine written by no less a friend of the Liberal party than Peter Newman that the Minister of National Health and Welfare has only five other members of the cabinet who still support her on this plan, and at the same time the Prime Minister himself says only "as soon as possible".