

Canada Pension Plan

in order to try to promote national unity Ontario would join the Canada pension plan.

Mr. Benson: Would the hon. member permit a question. I wonder if he watched national television two weeks ago and saw the chairman of the Ontario pension committee and the premier of Ontario speak in glowing terms about the Canada pension plan, and indeed taking credit for the important part they have played in its development?

Mr. Chatterton: No, I did not see that.

The Chairman: Order. May I bring to the attention of the minister and the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich that they appear to be discussing the principle of the bill, which was adopted some weeks ago. I invite the hon. member to direct his comments to clause 114.

Mr. Chatterton: I submit that the comments I have been making are relevant to clause 114. I could delay them until we discuss clause 115, but in reply to the Minister of National Revenue may I say he seems like a very happy child having listened to television.

Mr. Benson: I was listening to the premier of Ontario.

Mr. Chatterton: I refer to the written brief submitted by the government of Ontario which to my knowledge, unless you can tell me otherwise, has not been refuted by the government of Ontario. The Minister of National Health and Welfare seems to say that this is Utopia we have arrived at, and that we are going to have a national plan. I am saying the government is trying to fool the people of Canada by claiming that this is a national pension plan, though there is no assurance that it will be.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. member seems to be entirely disregarding the admonition of the Chair. I asked him to co-operate with the Chair by relating his remarks to the clause being considered.

Mr. Chatterton: I was merely following on the general approach of the minister.

Mr. Langlois: How will the funds collected by the federal government for the national scheme be returned to the provinces? Will they be returned at all, or will they be returned, less the interest and expenses of collection?

Mr. Benson: I think I dealt with that question about 15 or 20 minutes ago and indicated that under this clause the funds are returned

to the provinces. The investments which they have in the Canada pension plan are returned to them and they are required to assume the obligations specified by clause 114.

Mr. Langlois: Will this be returned to the provinces without any obligations on them so that they will not have to follow a plan similar to this one?

Mr. Benson: Once a province decides, 30 days following royal assent to this bill, to enter this plan the only way it can get out is by setting up a comparable plan, and if it sets up a plan which, in the opinion of the Minister of National Health and Welfare is comparable, then it can move out. At that point it would get the investments which it has in the Canada pension plan.

Mr. Langlois: That means the provinces have to choose a plan that will be approved by the Minister of National Health and Welfare. What if a provincial plan is better than the one we have got? There can be more than two ideas in one head, in fact more than two ideas in many heads. The provincial plan might be more advantageous to some people who have contributed to the Canada pension plan, but if the provincial plan is not similar to this one the province will not be allowed to operate it. I do not see why the minister should regulate on that. I believe it should be left entirely to the decision of the province.

Miss LaMarsh: I or anyone holding my position would not make that decision on his or her own. It would be a matter for the government of the day; but as I explained to the hon. member for Peace River ten or 15 minutes ago one could not have people paying contributions unless they were assured that for all time it was safe to make those contributions and that they would get due returns. That is why a province must at least give comparable benefits and must assume the obligations of individual contributors to ensure that they do not lose on their plan.

Mr. Langlois: According to the minister, if she gives consent and agrees that a comparable plan has been offered and that the people in the province will not lose by it, then any province which desires to do so can apply its own plan. Is that the general sense of what the minister is saying? Or does the plan have to be strictly similar to her own?

Miss LaMarsh: It has to be a comparable plan.