

Canada Pension Plan

An hon. Member: Joe for leader.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to the House that the point has been made before and that the arguments the hon. parliamentary secretary is advancing now, in support of his contention, which is very defensible, that hon. members have the right to ask questions have been made before, I wonder whether we will gain anything by pursuing the matter further. Orders of the day.

● (1510)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA PENSION PLAN

CONTRIBUTIONS OF MEMBERS OF CERTAIN RELIGIOUS SECTS, INTEREST RATE ON DELAYED PAYMENTS, PAYMENT OF LEGAL EXPENSES

The House resumed, from Thursday, September 13, consideration of the motion of Mr. Lalonde for the second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs of Bill C-190, to amend the Canada Pension Plan.

Mr. William Rompkey (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few comments on this bill, particularly in respect of its effect on the people of Newfoundland.

This particular piece of legislation, together with other social legislation brought in by this government and previous Liberal administrations, has been a godsend to our people. Certainly, our elderly people can remember the time when they lived on a subsistence income, from hand to mouth, and knew not where the next morsel of bread would be coming from, when survival was the prime consideration. There have been changes in some communities, while in other communities in Newfoundland that change has not been so obvious. This piece of legislation, along with the family allowance benefits, old age pensions and other social assistance legislation brought in by this government and, as I said, previous Liberal administrations, have been of great benefit to the people of Newfoundland. No longer do they have to fear what the future may bring, and no longer is there a question as to where the next meal is coming from because for many people in Newfoundland there is now a guaranteed annual income.

I wholeheartedly support the main thrust of the argument and the policy of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde), and his hope that we will eventually get to the point where we guarantee an income to all Canadians, not just through the use of social programs to allow them to survive but by creating jobs in order that they may be useful and productive citizens. We should work toward the day when we have a guaranteed annual income for all Canadians, and I think this is a step in the right direction.

I am particularly pleased with the one aspect of this amendment in so far as it applies to the situation at Goose Bay. As members of the House will know, and certainly

[Mr. Speaker.]

the government does, the United States force at Goose Bay is phasing out its operations in that community, leaving a partial economic vacuum. It has been the duty and responsibility of this government, together with the government of Newfoundland, to provide for that situation. Part of the problem has or will be solved with the setting up of the Goose Bay project group, the objective of which is to broaden the economic base of Goose Bay by finding other employment for the people of that area. I might say that some 500 or 600 people are affected by this change.

Mr. Barnett: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There was some noise in the House and I did not hear which order number was called. Having listened to the remarks of the hon. member, I am wondering whether the order I thought had been called was in fact called, that order having reference to Bill C-190.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The order that has been called is in respect of Bill C-190, to amend the Canada Pension Plan and to refer it to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs. Does that answer the hon. member's question?

Mr. Barnett: It answers part of my question, Mr. Speaker, but it does not explain the relationship between the remarks of the hon. member and the bill before us.

Mr. Rompkey: Mr. Speaker, there is one aspect of this bill which has particular reference to the Goose Bay situation, and I was trying to establish the context in which this bill has that effect. This is of particular importance to the people in my area because of the present employment situation there and the changed situation of about 500 or 600 people.

This bill provides that Canada Pension Plan coverage will be provided the civilian employees of the USAF base in Goose Bay who were not covered previously. I want to put on the record the fact that this amendment to the act has great meaning for these people. There was a pension plan for these employees at the excelsior plant, some of whom found it to be favourable, but there was a great deal of dissatisfaction as well.

This amendment to the Canada Pension Plan provides that these employees will at least have the benefit of some pension rights which were denied them previously. I submit that this is a particularly important aspect of this bill, and I am pleased that the minister has seen fit to include it. He made the announcement in Goose Bay when this amendment was first proposed, and I would simply like to say today that I am very pleased indeed to see this bill before the House.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question? I listened with interest to the remarks of the hon. parliamentary secretary, the member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador (Mr. Rompkey), for whom I have the greatest respect. I am sure he did not mean to convey the impression in his preliminary remarks that prior to the advent of the social welfare measures which came to Newfoundland as a consequence of confederation, and he specified the family allowance, old age pension and so on, our people were living from hand to mouth. He conveyed the impression that we were in a