

Canada Pension Plan (No. 2)

terday spoke about an adjustment of the eligibility age for the old age security which could be progressively reduced from 65 to 60 years. It is, I think, the member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Rose) who, this afternoon, spoke about that matter. We now have workers aged 60 to 65 who cannot find a job because of their age and who, as they are not eligible for the old age security, must be satisfied with welfare allowances.

If we want people between 60 and 65 to leave the labour force we should see that they get the old age security in the same way as at the time of the last change, that is to say by reducing the eligibility age one year at a time over a five-year period. I would not mention any country, but some have a pension plan in which you take the years of service and the age and if they add up to 80, I think, retirement is compulsory. In several instances, some employees must retire even if they are younger than that.

That is why, in my view, officials of the department ought to consider that matter further in order to be able to set up a general plan aiming at the early reduction of the eligible age for old age security pension.

I would like them to look after another case which perhaps would be acceptable to those who will consider it faster than the proposal I made earlier, namely that of the spouse of a beneficiary of old age security pension who is not actually aged 65. Where one of the spouses is aged from 60 to 65 and the other is eligible for old age security pension, the former should also be entitled to that pension.

If I make these two suggestions, it is because everyday, in the riding that I represent, that request is put to me by citizens who have retired from the labour market and who, by this very fact, see themselves without any immediate income and must apply for welfare. When a Canadian has had to work all his life in order to live, and not always for a very high salary, I find a little degrading that he be forced to go on welfare before being eligible for his old age pension. Studies should be made to find out at what level and how such a project should be implemented. I am personally convinced it is possible to do something, at least to have some studies conducted. After all, I believe I should insist more in order that people between 60 and 65 years of age be entitled to pensions when the spouse is eligible.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage all my hon. colleagues to continue in the right direction as laid out in the budget speech, that is to readily accept the two amendments to the bill now before us, with the hope that very soon the minister will present other amendments, as he has promised, in order to give greater access to the Canada Pensions Plan and the Quebec Pension Plan for the 500,000 Canadians who are totally dependent on them, while, at the same time, making them more interesting for them.

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, the bill now under consideration is characterized by two main features: the first deals with the consumer price index leading to an equivalent increase in benefits payable under the legislation. The second refers to an increase in the year's maximum pensionable earnings. I readily accept both amendments to the Canada Pension Plan but, for a very special reason, I have decided this

[Mr. Loisel.]

afternoon to restrict my comments to the first feature, that is the consumer price index.

I am not so much interested in the validity of the argument in support of a rise in the index applicable to benefits. This I openly accept. What does interest me is a group of persons to whom neither indexes are applicable at the moment. This problem is complicated and I fail to understand it. This is why I want to put it clearly in the hope that the minister may be able to give us some explanations regarding a really strange situation.

If the government is so much aware, as the hon. member for Saint-Henri (Mr. Loisel) just pointed out to us, of the fate of those suffering from the disastrous effects of the rise in the cost of living, I am confident that the minister will do his utmost to solve the problem which I am about to make known to you.

● (1710)

[English]

I am very happy to see in the chamber this afternoon the parliamentary secretary to the minister because I hope he will draw to the attention of the minister the remarks I am planning to make. I rise to speak today for many people who have no voice in this House. They live in Canada. Some are Canadians and can vote, but most of them are not yet Canadians and therefore cannot vote; therefore they have no spokesman. These people came to Canada to be with their families who had immigrated before them; they are the mothers and fathers of emigrants from Britain. They came here with what they could by way of assets from Britain because their families had preceded them and they wanted to spend the rest of their days with them. Why should I feel called upon to speak for them today? It is because of the pensions they draw here and the steps being taken by the minister to rectify the situation.

The background is worth recounting, Mr. Speaker. The British pension is a contributory pension; for the length of one's working life one makes contributions to it. Should a contributor decide to leave Britain for Canada after making contributions, he will receive the pension due when he becomes eligible for it. It will be paid at the rate being paid on the date of departure from Britain. That is, if he decides to come to Canada, for example, to stay within the Commonwealth.

However, if he decides to go to a country with which Britain has a reciprocal agreement on social security, he will receive the pension as adjusted from time to time in Britain in accordance with cost of living increases—adjusted right up to the moment of his entitlement—and he will receive all subsequent adjustments as they are made. That is, if he decides to go to a country where there is a reciprocal agreement on social security. These countries include Austria, the Common Market countries, Cyprus, Malta, Switzerland, Israel, Yugoslavia, Turkey, the United States and Jamaica, not to mention the Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey and Bermuda. But not Canada. So emigrants from Britain to Canada, having contributed all their working lives to a pension plan in Britain, find that by coming here, to a country in the Commonwealth, their pension level is frozen just because Canada has no reciprocal agreement with Britain on social security.