

Canada Pension Plan (No. 2)

may quote from page 2 of the preface to that paper on social security, the so-called orange paper, as follows:

This working paper has been prepared as the Government of Canada's contribution to the launching of this review. It is not designed to present a prescription or a panacea for every weakness in Canada's welfare system. Nor is it meant as a set of fixed proposals put forward by the Government of Canada to parliament and the provinces, for early legislative implementation. Rather it is designed to outline the broad directions of policy which would, in the view of the government, lead to a more effective and better co-ordinated system of social security for Canadians.

On the same page the minister makes reference to two specific proposals, the second being a proposal to amend the Canada Pension Plan. Perhaps I may quote again from this page as follows:

Two specific proposals are contained in this paper and the Government of Canada would like to see them implemented as soon as possible. The first would involve a very substantial increase in family and youth allowances. This is a priority which seems generally to be accepted by the provinces, and ought therefore to be capable of early implementation. The second is a proposal to amend the Canada Pension Plan so as to remove, or at least raise, the present ceiling on the escalation of pension benefits (in relation to changes in the consumer price index) and to increase the year's maximum pensionable earnings (and thus increase, over time, the maximum pensions payable). Under the Canada Pension Plan, it will be necessary to gain the support of two-thirds of the provinces representing two-thirds of the Canadian people in order to implement these proposals. We hope that this support will be forthcoming.

Again in the working paper on social security in Canada, the so-called orange paper, at page 20 the minister has outlined very specifically the social insurance strategy. In this paper he makes reference specifically to the Canada Pension Plan, the workmen's compensation Plan, the unemployment insurance plan, the Quebec Pension Plan, and more specifically proposition No. 4 which perhaps I might quote:

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That government should continue to encourage people to save to meet the contingencies of life, and to provide for retirement, through social insurance plans. The benefits from these plans, like income from employment, should be supplemented where required from an income supplementation plan.

What is readily apparent is that at this time we once again have a discussion of a social insurance strategy in which the Canada Pension Plan has received top priority. Once again we have the impression, as we read the orange paper, that in effect we are talking about a pure form of social insurance and that once again the government has failed to define the role of the Canada Pension Plan in its over-all social security system.

We are, therefore, once again confronted with a plan that has features of social insurance not requiring internal subsidies, and in addition has features consistent with welfare including subsidies similar to other income support programs. Since it is apparent that the Canada Pension Plan can emphasize either the welfare or insurance aspects of the plan, since the minister has asked for a reasoned and sympathetic debate concerning how best to provide for the security of income for all Canadians, and since he has indicated the vital importance of the Canada Pension Plan in the total picture of income security, surely it is absolutely essential that the minister outline

[Mr. Holmes.]

the specific role the Canada Pension Plan is to play in our social security system.

One additional point which concerns me is the accuracy of the actuarial data one sees associated with the Canada Pension Plan. I am no expert in this regard, but it is my impression that the experts not infrequently have differing opinions in analysing the actuarial data associated with a normal insurance program. Surely where the problem is compounded by an insurance welfare scheme, the validity of actuarial data is doubly suspect to interpretation. I think it is important, and I hope that at an appropriate time the minister will outline the philosophy regarding this fundamental and very important issue in respect of the Canada Pension Plan with relation to the whole social insurance structure.

In conclusion, may I say I have indicated my support for this bill but I would also ask the minister to pursue those matters which have been referred to by other members of this House. The hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard) this afternoon spoke about specific matters. He referred to the delay in having pensions approved. I would concur in that observation.

In addition, there was reference to survivors' and disability benefits and to the fact that the spouses and children of male or female contributors should receive benefits on the same basis. At the present time, husbands of deceased female contributors are not eligible for a pension unless the wife contributed more than 50 per cent of the family income.

Again, I congratulate the minister for the significant amendments but I would ask him at an appropriate time to see whether it is possible to answer some of the questions I have raised.

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, as I always am, I was interested in the remarks of the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Leblanc). Perhaps he did so whimsically, I do not know, but certainly he heaped a multitude of praise upon a rather embarrassed minister. The minister was once known as the grey eminence; but as I looked over at him as the hon. member for Laurier was speaking, he could have been described as the red eminence. I feel that the minister is really quite self-effacing; perhaps that is why he was embarrassed by this praise. He is not accustomed to it. I feel, also, the minister is deserving of some praise but I do not intend to prostrate myself before the font of "St. Marc."

The hon. member for Laurier made some suggestions. Naturally, he was pleased about the results of last evening in the province of Quebec. I would remind him that a year ago tonight perhaps members of his party were not quite so pleased about the results all across Canada. The hon. member for Laurier gave his litany of the accomplishments of the minister and other ministers in obtaining federal-provincial agreements. Naturally, we all take credit for everything we can, but I have a feeling that had the result of one year ago been a little different and we had a majority rather than a minority government, some of the many and very valuable reforms about which the hon. member spoke this evening might never have seen the light of day.