

*Pension Legislation Delayed*

This refers to legislation which had been promised, legislation which was considered so important that it was the keystone in the arch of the Liberal victory in April; it was something many people had counted on; it was legislation which they had been led to expect would be enacted promptly. Yet now it is given such low priority that time spent by hon. members in discussing almost any other matter is allowed to stand in the way of its implementation.

On October 18, as reported at page 3735 of *Hansard*, I asked the Prime Minister, because there had been a statement on this subject by Premier Robarts, whether we could have an assurance that the plan would be proceeded with at this session of parliament. His answer was:

I have already indicated that the Canada pension plan will be proceeded with as soon as possible.

I then asked as a supplementary question:

Is the Prime Minister aware of the fact that that answer has been interpreted as meaning the plan is to be put off until a later session? Can he not give a definite answer with respect to this session?

To this, the Prime Minister replied that he was not responsible for other people's interpretations. When my hon. friend from Burnaby-Coquitlam made an observation to the effect that this interpretation was apparently being made by none other than the premier of Ontario, the Prime Minister replied:

Any interpretation of that kind that the plan will not be proceeded with at this session would certainly be premature.

He did not deny the interpretation. He just said it was too soon to put that kind of interpretation upon it. A few days later I asked the Prime Minister if he would give the house a line-up of the business to be dealt with during the balance of the session, and he indicated he would. It is no secret that one of the things I hoped he would include in that list was the Canada pension plan legislation. I got no satisfaction in that respect. On the orders of the day this afternoon, I asked the question whether in view of the statement which the Minister of National Health and Welfare made to the national Liberal women's federation yesterday, that the plan would be proceeded with either this session or at the next, the Prime Minister could tell us which it is to be—this session or next. He gave the same answer—"as soon as possible".

The other day in another exchange the Minister of National Health and Welfare said that the government is as interested as ever in the Canada pension plan and is discussing the matter with the provinces. Surely, Mr. Speaker, my grievance is quite clear that there is a world of difference between the assurance in the election campaign that it would be

proceeded with, between the categorical statement in the speech from the throne that it was coming, between the Prime Minister's assurance in his speech that these things would be proceeded with at this session, between the earlier statement of the Minister of National Health and Welfare that her career was tied to this pension plan and if the pension plan went down she would go down too, between all of these assurances and the statements we are now getting that it will be as soon as possible, maybe this session, maybe next, and that the government is still interested in the Canada pension plan.

I think that statement of the Minister of National Health and Welfare is really the pay-off. This is the government's baby. This is the keystone in the arch of the Liberal success at the last election. This was the one precise proposal. Most of the rest of the things that the Liberals talked about in the campaign, apart from the position they were going to take on nuclear arms, were in vague generalities. Here was something that was precise. But now, instead of its being something about which we can get a firm answer that the government is going ahead, we are told by the responsible minister, the minister who was prepared to tie her career to this, only that the government is still interested in the Canada pension plan. We contend that this house deserves more than that from the government. We contend that the people of Canada deserve more than that from the government. We contend that we have the right to the assurance that this plan is going to be proceeded with at this session of parliament.

As I have already said, the Minister of National Health and Welfare herself gave a timetable when she spoke on the 18th of July. Surely this makes it quite clear that if the plan is not proceeded with at this session, if it is put off until 1964, the whole timetable will have to be pushed along. That will mean that contributions will not start in the fall of 1964 but will start in 1965 or 1966 or 1967. Every year that the beginning of the contributions is put off puts off the first year in which benefits will be enjoyed by people who are reaching the age of 70. If the plan were carried forward as promised it would mean that people who are now 68 years of age could count on an addition to their old age security out of the Canada pension plan when they reach 70 and, of course, people 67, 66 and down could all count on such a supplement. But if the plan is put off it means that the 68-year olds can kiss that idea goodbye. It means it is gone for the 69-year-olds. It means we will have again another round of the whole need for raising the flat rate benefit of old age security itself.