

*Old Age Security*

plans, investments or other sources which can be seen as providing whatever supplementary margin of comfort the individual might require.

This retirement system gives Canadian workers a great deal of flexibility in determining when they will retire. First, there is no federal statute legally requiring the retirement of each and every Canadian at a specified age. Benefits are available at age 65 under both the OAS program and the CPP, but neither stipulates that in order to receive benefits the individual must be retired or removed from the active labour force.

A wide array of retirement options is available to Canadians. Almost two million Canadians have taken advantage of the tax savings and the wide range of choice allowed in setting up registered retirement savings plans. When the time comes to turn their savings into retirement income, taxpayers can either invest their RRSP proceeds in a life annuity with an insurance company prior to reaching 71 years of age, or withdraw the funds in a lump sum and pay income tax on this amount in the same year. Two additional alternatives increase flexibility while retaining the basic principle that RRSP funds are for retirement income. The first alternative allowed the purchase of a fixed term annuity to provide benefits to age 90. The second alternative allowed taxpayers to have RRSP savings placed in an investment vehicle known as a registered retirement income fund. The transfer of an RRSP into any of the retirement income options can occur at any time between age 60 and age 71. These alternatives provide a range of choice available to Canadians in planning for their retirement.

The motion before us today is not new to the House. This is not the first time the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has proposed this motion. If the hon. member's tenacity in the past is an example of what is to come, it will probably not be the last time.

**Mr. Knowles:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacBain:** But I think there is a very real danger in over legislating. Governments have been accused of this tactic in the past. It is time we all recognized that it is nearly impossible to devise a plan with universal applicability which, at the same time, has the capability of adapting to individual needs. Perhaps it is better to have a straightforward basic plan which is fairly simple to administer and from which the individual, if he or she wants, can build to develop a personalized retirement package.

● (1640)

The issue of retirement age has been debated in this House on many occasions, as I have said, and that in itself is evidence of our concern and desire to explore the various approaches to retirement. As our elderly population continues to grow, the age of retirement becomes more and more relevant, both in economic and in social terms.

What have elderly Canadians a right to expect? Canadians have traditionally believed not only in the right to work but in the right to work for as long as they wished, or were able to. Hon. members will agree that as a fundamental right senior

Canadians should have the right to make reasonable personal choices. It follows then that we must retain a retirement income system in this country which makes some provisions for individual options.

**Mr. Knowles:** Would the hon. member permit a question?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Would the hon. member permit a question from the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre?

**Mr. MacBain:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Knowles:** In view of the fact that the hon. member believes that senior Canadians should have a number of options, does he not agree that one of those options should be to retire at 60 and have a reasonable measure of security?

**Mr. MacBain:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question. The cost of retiring at age 60 may make it impossible for most senior Canadians to exercise that option. It may be holding out something which at this point in time we cannot offer.

**Mr. Knowles:** Then, is the hon. member limiting the number of options which he holds out for senior Canadians?

**Mr. MacBain:** I think to that extent, yes, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on the point raised by the hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes). This is one of the points which concerned me, and probably others, with regard to the Constitution wherein it is said that there is no discrimination because of age. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre expressed the hope that there would be no discrimination because of age. The difficulty is that when this provision is written into the charter of rights, if the judges decide that is the case, then our hands are tied. This is one of the very dangerous points of that type of legislation if left to the judges to decide and not to the legislators of our country. If some decision needs to be made without it being tied into the charter, individuals could come to their members of Parliament and members of their legislatures and the matter could be brought before the government of the day which could see that justice was done. But if a decision is given by the Supreme Court of Canada, then our hands are tied until the Constitution is changed. I hope that is one of the reasons why the Supreme Court judges will throw it out.

The next point I would like to mention is that social legislation is important in any country. The party to which I belong is very conscious of the importance of social legislation. I think probably every party in Canada has its own social legislation program. I personally feel that social legislation should be written in such a way that our people generally come under that legislation. That is why I question the social legislation which is now included in the negotiation package of our postal service which is presently on strike. They are asking for a maternity package. If it is granted, then one particular group will have better maternity benefits than any other group in Canada, including those on unemployment insurance. Thus,