

Canada Pension Plan

This is a pension plan which, it can be appreciated, becomes a pledge of the country to the people that their accumulation of pension contributions will never be lost. I would not want to think any member of the public might be alarmed into believing that at some future time all this might come to pass and their money would have gone for nothing. As I said to my hon. friend, it is a valid objection, it is a valid argument. However, I feel that in view of all the considerations, it is highly unlikely, and not a matter for anyone to feel disquieted about.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Chairman, it is interesting to hear the Minister of National Health and Welfare explain, with all the eloquence she can muster, that one or more provinces can join the plan and other provinces can opt out. According to her every province in Canada, except Quebec, naturally, are satisfied with the federal government's pension plan.

I have just returned from a trip to western Canada where I had the opportunity of meeting people in Winnipeg, Edmonton and in every western province, and these people are doing their utmost to deride the government's pension plan.

The authorities in British Columbia, where the old age pension is the same as in Quebec and the other provinces, decided to add \$30 to the pension of \$75 a month. As a matter of fact, such action was proposed to the British Columbia legislature in Victoria. Old people will therefore get a pension of \$105 a month, without a means test at 70 and with a means test at 65.

Mr. Chairman, I wonder on what ground the Minister of National Health and Welfare stands when she says that the provinces as a whole are pleased with the pension plan. In fact, in one province legislation is enacted, in another province another piece of legislation is enacted, and here we have a bill so thick that even the most thick-headed will be unable to understand the first word of it. Why should we keep on discussing, when the provinces can manage their own business alone without any interference whatsoever from the Minister of National Health and Welfare?

If British Columbia can enact legislation without the help of the Minister of National Health and Welfare, if Quebec can opt out of the Canada pension plan and if the premier of Manitoba, Mr. Roblin, has indicated that he would rather not join the Canada pension

[*Miss LaMarsh.*]

plan, why should we keep up our consideration and discussion about a pension plan that the provinces do not seem prepared to join? That is what I would like the Minister of National Health and Welfare to explain clearly at this time.

[*Text*]

Miss LaMarsh: Mr. Chairman, it is most unfortunate that after the house unanimously passed a resolution that it was in favour of the principle, we now find we have a member who is not in favour of it. If indeed the province of British Columbia is about to enact legislation to give \$30 more to old age pensioners I would say "Hurrah" and I would tell every one of my old age pension constituents who write to me saying they would like more, where they can find their bonanza. But seriously, Mr. Chairman, I am somewhat disturbed by inaccuracies in my hon. friend's peroration. It is not true that any other province has indicated its intention to set up its own comparable pension plan. Only one province has so indicated, and indeed Quebec passed a unanimous resolution in its legislature as long ago as August, 1963. No other province has so indicated despite a number of conferences and a great deal of correspondence.

Mr. Langlois: May I correct the minister. I was listening to the hon. member speaking in French and also listening to the translation. I think there was an error in translation. The reference was to the possibility of Manitoba wishing to do so.

Miss LaMarsh: Then I apologize for misinterpretation.

Mr. Chatterton: The problem raised by the hon. member for Peace River indicates the real difficulty we might find ourselves in by virtue of the fact that in the last election the Liberal party promised it would establish a national pension plan; when in fact it knew it had no constitutional right to do so. The only way it can do so is by pretending that there is a national plan, and it must be pointed out that a province has the constitutional right to opt out of it.

The minister implied that there was a general consensus among the provinces that this is a good plan. I suggest she refresh her memory by reading the Ontario brief. It indicates very clearly that Ontario is most dissatisfied with the provisions of the proposed Canada pension plan. Certainly the premier of Ontario indicated in his speech to the provincial legislature on January 21 that