

The proposal to expand the pension plan as quickly as practical is merely a recognition for the need for action. If you compare the proposed contributions of 4 per cent for employees, and 4 per cent for employers, with contributions paid in other western countries, Canada does not show up too well. Employers in the United States alone contribute 6 per cent, and I have already indicated previously what employers in Germany and Great Britain and all those other countries contribute. In addition, governments are called on to make significant contributions in most of these countries.

We have been coasting along in this country on the cheap, with employers' contributions fixed at 1.8 per cent since the beginning of 1966, and employees' contributions fixed at 1.8 per cent too. That is nearly 14 years. I was there and I was as much responsible as anyone. Practically everything has gone up, and some things have gone sky-high. So we need to restore some better balance.

The argument that additional costs of business arising out of more generous public pensions are catastrophic is not very impressive. It is hardly credible that an increase in payroll taxes in the order of 2 per cent will prove a financial disaster. Profit levels appear to be quite healthy, particularly in certain segments, and whatever burden there is on business rests better there than on the backs of the poor old people.

The evident fact is that the elderly retired people do not have the market power they need. The big unions and the big companies have it and they can keep an even keel when the waves get high. It is the little people, the old, the retired, who get swamped.

In conclusion, let me quote the closing words of the report of the committee:

A helpful and compassionate approach is needed but this will only come with public appreciation of the twin problems of retirement and income. Your Committee believes that the subject of this report is a major social issue just as important as Old Age Security and Medicare. It is earnestly hoped that this report will contribute to the understanding of the Canadian people and, in particular, their essential role in building a social structure that will be the envy of the western world. Let this be the first firm forward step in "Retirement Without Tears."

This will come about when we dedicate the eighties to the aged.

**Hon. Edgar Fournier:** Honourable senators, as Deputy Chairman of the Special Senate Committee on Retirement Age Policies, I should like to make a few brief comments. My remarks will be short owing to the difficulties I have to contend with and have had to for the last eight years.

[*Translation*]

I feel however that I should have failed in my obligations if I did not say a few words in my mother tongue. My remarks are directed to the members of the Special Senate Committee on the Retirement Age Policies as a whole, on their proceedings and accomplishments.

[*English*]

Honourable senators, I was just repeating in French that my remarks will be short and will deal mostly with the responsibilities and functions of the committee, leaving the detail and the content of the report to other members of the group.

The committee consisted of two groups, the Senate members and the supporting staff. The special committee was appointed on December 7, 1977, with Senator David Croll as its chairman.

Our first duty was to find an executive staff which could meet the requirements. We were looking for devoted people who were not guided by the clock and who were not afraid to work long hours. After interviewing several prospects, surely enough we found our staff members through the public service. I may say frankly and honestly that this is a most devoted executive staff; it is beyond reproach.

After the usual or normal amount of squabbling we were allocated some space on the third floor of the Victoria Building, where we worked under the direction of John Desmarais, Ph.D., with the assistance of Warren James, Ph.D., Ted Wilgress, Ph.D., and Miss Catherine Anderson, a member of the Ontario Bar and the Quebec Bar, and Mr. George Coderre, clerk of the committee. In turn, these persons were assisted by two permanent secretaries and six other secretaries. The workload alternated among the secretaries, but there were never more than two at a time, and these were drawn from the permanent staff. At times when mail was rather heavy, when we experienced problems of all sorts, whether personal or otherwise, the work was still done efficiently and all correspondence was promptly looked after.

From December 7, 1977, to date, the Senate committee has managed to function despite many setbacks. For example, scheduling meetings to please witnesses was a major problem. There were other problems such as trying to arrange for senators to attend the presentation of briefs when they were involved with other obligations or activities. It was necessary for senators to read briefs prior to their being presented, and there was the ever-present possibility that the committee could be abolished at any time. Such problems even formed the subject matter of some of our meetings—and tonight is no exception—because there was the real fear that, if the committee did not survive, all of the work it had already done and all of its financial investment would simply go down the drain.

Prior to the first public meeting, 28 briefs on various aspects of retirement were presented in camera to members of the committee by the Research Branch of the Parliamentary Library, and as a result many statistics were studied.

● (2300)

On behalf of the committee, I extend my thanks to the staff of the Research Branch of the Library of Parliament for their contribution.

The first public hearing took place on November 14, 1978. Subsequently there were 24 public hearings; there were 37 briefs presented by various organizations from across Canada; there were eight oral presentations, and 15 briefs were submit-