

Canada Pension Plan

travel around the world, you can do so; but you have to have a number. All of us in this house have our railway passes that we use when travelling by train. We present these passes to the train conductor. Does he take down your name? No; he takes down your number. Are we insulted by having these numbers? Throughout the whole of our lives we have numbers as a means of simplifying things. In the end, when we die, each of us will be buried with a burial permit that has a number on it. So why all this fuss about numbers to facilitate the administration of an important and complicated pension plan?

Mr. Stenson: Mr. Chairman, we have now established that we are going to have numbers.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Stenson: The Minister of National Revenue said this was optional for Quebec; they can take it or leave it. I would like to ask him this question. If they do not take these numbers, how is the pension plan going to be portable?

Mr. Benson: Mr. Chairman, I do not think this would affect the portability of the pension plan. It will certainly make it much easier to move from province to province if we have a single numbering system across the country. However, if you had a different number in the province of Quebec and moved from Quebec into the Canada pension plan, I am sure the two numbers could be integrated and we could feed into our computer a cross-reference for these numbers.

Mr. Stenson: Is the minister assured that everybody in Quebec will be numbered? This is what I am worried about.

Mr. Benson: Mr. Chairman, you cannot operate a modern social insurance plan without a number.

Mr. Winkler: A supplementary question—

The Chairman: The hon. member for Mégantic.

Mr. Langlois: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Winkler: I have a supplementary question, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: The hon. member for Mégantic has been trying to get the floor for a long time.

Mr. Langlois: Mr. Chairman, I want to go back to what the hon. member for Edmonton East was saying a few minutes ago about this compulsory number business, because if

[Mr. Knowles.]

you look at clause 105 (1) you will see that you are graciously offered a number, but then they graciously impose a fine if you do not have that number. This is the part I am worried about; if a guy doesn't want that number.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has given a whole series of numbers, but there is only one you do not have anything to say about; and that is the last one, when you are dead. I do not care what number they give me then, so long as they give me a place to rest. All the others are voluntary numbers; you can take them or leave them. I can get a railway pass, if I want to; I can get a marriage licence with a number on it, if I want to. Nobody is going to push me into that.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Langlois: These numbers are voluntary and you can have them if you wish. I remember distinctly that when unemployment insurance was brought in, only those who were eligible for unemployment insurance had to have a number. The minister said no, the thing is not compulsory because there are so many who are not on unemployment insurance; but all those who receive unemployment insurance, or come under the labour code at the moment and are working, have that number. Today the Minister of National Health and Welfare says, on my part, that I have to have a number too. But this covers everybody in the country; so if you are compulsory in one part, and compulsory in the other part, taken together that gives you the whole and you might just as well say the thing is compulsory. Why not say that?

An hon. Member: It is.

Mr. Langlois: It is. Then why didn't you say so half an hour ago when the hon. member was asking you about it?

Mr. Benson: Mr. Chairman, we have been trying to say this for half an hour.

The Chairman: The hon. member for Grey-Bruce.

Mr. Winkler: Mr. Chairman, I knew that if I stood up for a third or fourth time you would see me. I have a question supplementary to the one asked by the hon. member for Peterborough. I understood from the question earlier that the province of Quebec had more or less accepted the basis of the numbering scheme which will be adopted. If that is the case, could the minister inform the committee if indeed there is an area of agreement with the province of Quebec in regard