

We have to find security for the person who takes on the important role of being the great maintainer of the family unit, which is still basic to our society despite all its changes and apparent changes. It is still the fundamental fabric of the kind of society in which we believe. I believe it is not beyond our ingenuity nor does it exceed our capacity to be able to give to the housewife equality of status.

Suggestions were made in the statement released by the minister. There is an excellent statement by S. June Menzies, the vice-chairman of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. I think it is very important for these and many other suggestions to be studied as quickly as possible. We do not want someone standing here in 10 years' time telling the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and myself that since it only took 10 years, we should feel proud. We cannot wait 10 years. The group is large, the injustice is vast.

I used to be told that marriage is a partnership. It should not be difficult to extend the concept of partnership to the basic home unit. Someone said that perhaps the best way to do this would be to have the husband pay the wife and pay her premiums. Some might suggest that this is an employer-employee relationship. It just might be a bit dicey, but the partnership I think is a beginning. This must be done quickly. The minister must use his powers of persuasion to convince his provincial counterparts that, as long as this important group is left out, the Canada Pension Plan is a most inadequate umbrella in the realm of provision for our future.

● (2050)

Indeed, I wonder about the whole program. We amend it frequently. Whoever succeeds the minister now sitting opposite us will no doubt introduce further amendments. Suggestions come out of dominion-provincial meetings from time to time. I wonder whether, with all our tailoring, tinkering and re-aligning, we should not be moving toward something more comprehensive. It seems to me we are moving now toward something like a negative income tax or a guaranteed annual income, though I do not think we are admitting it. When I look at the OAS and the CPP, and think of the great need which exists, of the constant tendency to change, the built-in tendency toward complexity, I wonder whether a more serious overview is required than the one to which the minister alluded.

The minister ended as he sometimes does, with an expression of a bursting sense of pride in what had been done. I think a more modest posture would better befit the bill. It is, of course, an improvement, and my hon. colleagues, because we are a highly organized party, will be dealing with various of its aspects. I noticed with some surprise that the minister quickly contradicted the hon. member for Palliser (Mr. Schumacher) when my hon. friend suggested that inflation was behind the introduction of this measure. Mr. Speaker, because we have indexed payments under this plan there is no way we can sit back and say inflation is out of the picture. That is myopia of the worst kind.

The trouble is that the basic amount is insufficient. The \$100 for OAS was insufficient before the act was brought into force. I pointed out that in terms of purchasing power

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recipients were back to 1945. The basic amount is insufficient, and so much per cent of insufficiency does not bring sufficiency, and it certainly does not bring affluence. We are dealing with this matter today because, unfortunately, the government is not able to deal with inflation. Thus, every piece of legislation which can be brought in is being used and, naturally, because some degree of amelioration is afforded, we support these efforts.

However, we do not support the idea that the entire subject is removed from the grievous, groaning and growing problem of inflation in the country. I know it is not. My hon. friends know it is not. And those Canadians, one in four, who live below the poverty line know it is not. The many Canadians who are eking out an existence on OAS or CPP know it is not. So these changes have to be made. It is not because of a technical consideration or the result of an outburst of generosity. It is because too many Canadians are having a hard time.

Mr. Speaker, I have made many mistakes in this House and, I suppose, in life, but one thing I try to avoid is making long speeches. They may never seem as short to others as they appear to me. But if, as a result of this bill some measure of relief is to be brought to thousands of Canadians, there is no disposition on this side to prolong discussion, although it must be noted we are dealing here with a highly complex document and a good deal of questioning will be necessary.

We shall try to restrain our eagerness to get at the football for a few hours because we would not wish to be accused of too hastily passing a measure comprising 46 pages and 57 clauses. It will be taken seriously by the group to which I belong. It will be considered co-operatively, and we expect to see the measure enacted shortly. After that we shall be making suggestions to the minister as to further ways in which he may be able to lighten the burden which has fallen on so many in Canada who are finding the going very tough at the present time.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I join with the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) in assuring the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) that he should have no difficulty with this bill. We shall be making some comments and suggestions, but it is a bill which we hope will be dealt with expeditiously on second reading, in committee, and at the final stage.

I had the privilege in 1964 and 1965 of being a member of the standing committee which dealt with the original Canada Pension Plan. I do not see many around the House tonight who were members of that committee. However, sitting with us then was a very able and effective private member who has lost that status now he has become a cabinet minister. I refer to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Basford).

Serving on that committee, one of the things I enjoyed, in addition to the good work I felt the committee did, was the opportunity of getting to know the members of the interdepartmental task force who had put the plan together and who were listening and paying attention to our discussions. I think they did excellent work, and as I have studied the bill now before us, and as I have listened to the