

*Canada Pension Plan*

● (1810)

I am reminded of the activities of Mrs. Ruth Callon, who has been active in a variety of community activities. She was active in the Lakehead Social Planning Council which played such an important part in establishing a diversity of community services. By researching the needs of the community, the council has played a vital part in establishing activities as diverse as the Castlegreen Co-operative, the Meals-on-Wheels organization and all types of other services. She has also served the United Way and has assisted in the fund-raising activities of the St. Joseph's Heritage, a seniors' facility, which is a vital and important facility in the City of Thunder Bay. In these various ways Mrs. Ruth Callon has exemplified the qualities of a volunteer in the community.

I am also reminded of Mrs. Ruth Cook, another person who was active in helping to found the Mental Health Association in our city. She, with Mrs. Callon, was one of the founders of the Volunteer Action Centre where the co-ordination of a great range of volunteer services is carried out. Mrs. Cook recently chaired a housing committee which considered the housing needs of persons who had been recently released from psychiatric facilities in the province and for whom the intention was to re-establish themselves in our community. These various activities indicate the value and the role that volunteers have in our society.

I suggest that volunteers give us thousands, even millions, of hours year by year in volunteer services in a great range of organizations. Their activities are carried out by the young and old. It is work done by women and men. I do not want to distinguish among them, particularly in this proposal for recognition of volunteer service, except to say that for those who have gainful occupations, CPP credits follow from that gainful occupation. For those who do not have that opportunity, I want to say something in a few moments about that social reality. This proposal could be of considerable value toward their retirement years.

The work of volunteers in a diversity of organizations is part of the justification for this proposal. It could be said that volunteers are just taking the jobs of people who should be paid for performing these services. In any single organization that might well be the case, even if it were only a part-time job. However, when we have volunteers who are active in a diversity of organizations, then clearly we see a situation in which this proposal would have merit, given that there is no way of stacking this variety of involvement up into a part-time or full-time job.

Although I have referred to only a few community organizations, there are others. I think of the Thunder Bay Multicultural Association, which is another context within which people provide service. In various communities there are food banks, including some in the City of Thunder Bay. It is just one of the sad realities of our depressed economic conditions. In these contexts as well services are provided by persons who deserve recognition by our society and by our Government, a

recognition which could be provided through the Canada Pension Plan.

There is also the needs of the volunteers themselves to be considered. I have already suggested that many volunteers are gainfully employed and that this proposal would not be of any value to them. However, there are those who are not. In fact, I was struck by the comments of my colleague, the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young), when he spoke yesterday in the debate on the Canada Pension Plan. He observed that at least half of the people who are employed in Canada are not covered by private pension plans. He stated:

For many of those Canadians it means looking forward to the so-called golden age of retirement as the golden age of poverty. It is a fact that 6 elderly single women out of 10 over the age of 65 are living on incomes well below the poverty line. In a country as rich as Canada, with our resources, potential and people, I think that is a national disgrace.

The reality of 6 out of 10 single women over the age of 65 living below the poverty line is one of the brutal realities that this motion addresses.

In many of our communities, in the past it has not been possible for a woman to find gainful employment. I suggest that is still the case, particularly in the single industry towns of northern Ontario and so much of the rest of Canada. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), was telling me some time ago about women in the Sudbury Basin who would dearly like to find gainful employment but did not see any opportunity of obtaining it. They became volunteers in the schools. They found some satisfaction and some fulfilment for themselves, some useful expenditure of their energies, in assisting the schools by supporting the efforts of teachers. They make the education of the children of the community a better one than it would be without them.

That type of service is hardly going to be recognized by school boards which already find themselves so hard-pressed to finance the school system. This type of activity, which is the only opportunity that these women have, deserves to be recognized by awarding to these people under the consolidated revenues of Canada credits toward their retirement years and toward the receipt of Canada Pension Plan benefits. This, then, is the need which I want to make clear; that is, the necessity of expanding the Canada Pension Plan to allow persons who do not now have any opportunity to achieve entitlement to have a part in it.

My colleague, the Hon. Member for Beaches, in commenting on Canada Pension Plan amendments which have been debated in the House to some extent, and which have gone to committee for consideration, pointed out that there are persons who find themselves unable, for reasons of illness or because of the nature of their contracts, to obtain Canada Pension Plan credits for those periods, or for perhaps much of their employment. He suggested that they be given the opportunity to contribute not just their own share but the employer's share toward annual credits. That is one possible route for beginning to move in this direction. My proposal goes much further than that. It actually envisions the Government on behalf of