

Pensions

severely than men: lack of stability, lack of coverage among small employers, lack of indexing of deferred pensions and pensions-in-pay and lack of survivor benefits.

Women suffer more because they are more likely to work for small employers, they are more likely to be in and out of the labour force due to family responsibilities and they are more likely to be widowed.

Subsequently the previous government recommended a full review of the pension and retirement income system and began contacting the provincial governments. This review will now be a part of the coming conference.

I was interested a few weeks ago to receive a letter from Lucy Pickard, the editor of *The Owl*, an adult recreation centre bulletin in Waterloo, expressing deep concern about women between the ages of 45 and 65. Lucy Pickard referred to women in that age group who find themselves doubly handicapped because of their limited education. Many of them had gone into teaching, for which they had inadequate qualifications. Many were provided with fewer educational incentives than then.

Lucy Pickard wrote:

The single woman restricted through her limited education was usually prevented from gaining the economic security derived from home ownership. Until relatively recently, lending institutions demanded the signature of a man as a guarantor in case of default in mortgage payments.

I have compared that tradition with another part of the Waterloo constituency; the matter of community building. I was talking today about the Mennonite tradition and the tradition of the doddy house, whereby the youngest son or daughter takes over the family farm and, through the years, the other sons and daughters are funded so they can buy their farms. I learned today of one family daughter who bought a farm from a childless couple near Heidelberg. That couple will live in the small doddy house. The tradition of caring goes on in parts of our community. Somehow to extend that tradition across the community is the challenge of the pension conference, soon to be held.

There are problems associated with the Canada Pension Plan, especially for women. The amount of one's pension under that plan is scaled to the amount of one's income, and, since on average women across Canada earn only 58 per cent of what men earn, automatically most women in the work force can expect lower pensions than men, but after retirement their needs are not fewer than those of men.

With respect to the eligibility of housewives, the recent Progressive Conservative convention confirmed that the Canada Pension Plan must be reformed to reflect more adequately the contribution of spouses to the economy. It recognized that there are big problems with the minister's suggestions for possible voluntary contributions by housewives. What happens, for example, if a working husband does not want to give his wife money to contribute? She will be unable to contribute. The government has not suggested an obligatory clause which would force husbands to allow wives to contribute. Wealthy spouses would be able to afford contributions, but not the poor. This would perpetuate the cycle of vicious poverty for the poor.

I must say we are encouraged by the start made in the income tax changes which will be retroactive to January 1 and which will allow spouses working in non-incorporated businesses to participate in their own right in the Canada Pension Plan, as do all other salaried workers in Canada. This provision was in the Crosbie budget, and we are encouraged that the minister has included this in the programs this government is bringing forward.

Private pension plans in the past have not been of much help to women. I am one who wishes these plans would deal with the problems faced by women. It is our hope that the National Pensions Conference to be held next week here in Ottawa will address some of these problems.

● (1710)

Company pensions do not help many women, as we are reminded by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Four out of five single, divorced or widowed women over 65 years of age receive no income from private pensions. A woman does not automatically receive her husband's pension after he dies because he may not have had a company pension. Only one in two Canadian workers benefits from company pension plans, and of those who do less than half have a widow's pension option. Those widows who do get a pension from their husband's employer usually collect only half of what their husband would have received.

For women working in private industry, accessibility to private pension plans has been minimal because plans have usually been confined to upper income workers, which excludes many women and almost all part-time workers and, of course, part-time workers are almost invariably women.

Because women tend to live longer, private industry has the real actuarial problem of the equal cost of the plan versus equal benefit. The insurance companies in my riding have been telling me regularly of the dilemma they face in trying to address this real problem. For example, if women will benefit five to ten years longer on average than men, should women's payments be larger? Could a company which institutes such a program then be charged with discriminatory regulations on the basis of sex?

The facts show that more and more women are living longer than men. Everyone becomes old, but women can expect to live to the age of 77, or seven years longer than men, on average. Right now, one million women in Canada are over 65, a quarter of a million more women than men in the same age group. We are told that in just 20 years the number of women over 65 will reach two million, and half of them will be over 75. By the turn of the century women over 75 will outnumber men in the same age group by two to one.

The third problem we have is the problem of vesting. The recent Progressive Conservative convention favoured an immediate review of private pension plans to encourage earlier vesting and complete portability. It is essential that next week's conference should look at this issue as it is a particular problem for women.