

*Canada Pension Plan*

contend that there is a certain insidious discrimination here which makes one group in particular seemingly inferior to others in that rights and benefits are denied them. Knowing that their contribution to the gross national product of this country is indeed significant—as I have stated, \$60 billion is the figure which has been attached to it—we can only conclude that housewives are not inferior in contributing to our society, but only in receiving its benefits.

I acknowledge that Bill C-49 would make certain beneficial changes to the Canada Pension Plan, but it will not result in eliminating the major inequity in the plan—its major shortcoming—that of denying to certain individuals the right to contribute to the plan. Until the government faces up to that problem, until it summons enough courage to do so, we will continue to have in this country measures such as this bill which belittle the contribution of women who work in the home.

● (1420)

**Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this subject largely because my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), had to be away from the House for very important reasons. It is not often that happens.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Orlikow:** Had he been here, he would certainly have spoken on this bill, as he has spoken on every question relating to pensions that has come up for more than a quarter of a century. We in the New Democratic Party naturally support the basic principles of the Canada Pension Plan. We look upon it as the only pension plan in this country which provides that a person who works is not penalized if and when he or she changes jobs or is laid off, as is the case with private pension plans. In virtually every industrial pension plan the worker who is laid off or who changes jobs suffers a very sharp penalty. He usually gets back only the money he put in, and very often without any interest it may have earned, and almost always does not get the matching contribution which the employer could have been paying into the plan.

The Canada Pension Plan is the only one in Canada that is universal and where the benefits are indexed. That is tremendously important. In recent years the cost of living has increased by 6 per cent to 10 per cent. A person who retires in 1977 may find, if it is not indexed, that by 1982 or 1987 his pension is not sufficient for his needs. Many people have pensions associated with their work, and until about a year ago they had reason to believe they could live their retirement in comparative comfort. The cost of living has gone up so rapidly, however, that if the amount of pension is fixed they often find they cannot even afford to continue living in the house that may have been their home for about 30 years.

A great campaign is being waged at the present time to convince the public that indexed pension plans such as the plan for the federal public service would bankrupt the country. In my opinion, this view is being put about by the insurance

[Miss MacDonald.]

companies. We do not believe it is true. We believe this country can afford to index pension plans, as has been done in Germany and Sweden where retiring workers draw something between 60 and 65 per cent of the best five years' earnings as pension. They are indexed either to the cost of living or to the average increase in industrial wages. This party proposed plans such as the Canada Pension Plan long before it was introduced, and of course we support any improvements the government can be persuaded to bring forward.

I have to say, on my own behalf, however, and as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said on second reading debate, that while the changes are headed in the right direction, they are of small importance. They will not greatly improve the benefits presently received by people who qualify. The amendments do not recognize the role of the spouse working in the home, nor do they provide any recognition or financial security for the spouse. The minister said he had looked at this question with a good deal of sympathy. He reminded us that the former member for Vancouver-Kingsway, Mrs. MacInnis, always advocated this and said that in her later years he had come to doubt her position.

I am not very impressed with what the minister had to say about the Advisory Committee on the Canada Pension Plan. Mrs. June Menzies, vice-president of the Anti-Inflation Board, was formerly a member of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and was very vocal and active in matters relating to improvements in the status of women. That was all right as long as she did not have any authority. She said all the right things as long as she was just in an advisory position. But when she went to the Anti-Inflation Board, government policy and directives suddenly had a great deal to do with her decisions on improving the status of women.

At the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg a committee was established to look into discrimination against women employees. Management and the union were represented on this committee, which reported that women workers were being paid less per hour than men for doing exactly the same work. It recommended that the jobs be reclassified and the pay for women workers be increased. Union and management negotiated and reached an agreement which brought women much closer to pay equality with men than before. Where the increase in pay for the women was more than it was for the men, however, the Anti-Inflation Board rejected it. The union appealed to the board—after Mrs. Menzies became a member—and the board awarded the women an increase of 25 per cent or less than the union and management agreed upon.

In light of that decision, I do not have much faith in Mrs. Menzies or in the minister's belief in protecting the status of women. These organizations are composed almost exclusively of good Liberals who will not do anything to disturb the wishes of the government. When it comes to a choice of whom will they satisfy, the government or the women we are supposed to represent, I believe—as I think the evidence will prove—that 95 per cent of the time they will come down on the side of the government. So I do not pay too much attention to the