

Supply

December, 1984, the elderly in our country will be \$85 per month better off than they were in 1980. That was the point I was making.

If the Hon. Member for Kingston and the Islands is serious in terms of her commitment for pension reform and for the guaranteed income supplement Bill to be passed in this House—and the Opposition House Leader was here just a few moments ago—she well knows that other pieces of legislation are being tied up at the present time. She knows how this goes. The Opposition want to have the Western Grain Stabilization Act introduced and passed as quickly as possible. We on the Government side have several pieces of legislation emanating from the February Budget that we would like to have passed, including the guaranteed income supplement increase and some measures that involve elements of pension reform that were in the February Budget.

Why do we not make a deal? The Opposition wants to have that Bill passed and we have pieces of legislation we would like to have passed. Why do they not instruct their House Leader to meet with ours? We would get these pieces of legislation through as quickly as possible. There are pieces of legislation that we deem to be a priority. That will have to be part and parcel of the deal.

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member asks why we do not deal with other pieces of legislation. That was very much the tone and temper of my speech. I think this Bill should have a greater priority. If the Government had any sense of priority, it would have at least put this Bill on the Order Paper. It would have introduced it. It would have drafted it and brought it into the House so that we would know it is there in the whole bargaining process. It is not even in the process where we can debate it.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the statistics in front of me, but I do know the concern that all of us have. I share with the Hon. Member for Sudbury (Mr. Frith) and the Hon. Member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) concern for people who will be retiring and are apprehensive about their retirement income. I like the idea of a universal old age pension. Those who worked and tried to get a pension were entitled to see something across the board. There were others who tried and were not able to do it. CN pensioners received small pensions. Therefore, it made good sense to have an across-the-board pension. It helped those who were not in a position to do it to have a guaranteed income supplement. We piled one more on top of that and required people to contribute to the Canada Pension Plan.

The information I have is that the Canada Pension Plan funding is in some difficulty. There is some apprehension that in order to make it actuarially sound, we will have to increase premiums or face increased costs. Figures I have seen indicate that the time frame is not that far in the future when there will be some difficulty with the Canada Pension Plan.

I listened to the Hon. Member talk about the 0.3 per cent increase and the fact that it would not cost the Government anything. All of the items suggested by the task force involve

some cost. I am concerned that we might push something like the Canada Pension Plan costs too high by bringing in too much at once. We have the old age pension, the guaranteed income supplement and the Canada Pension Plan, which has been improved. There are more people who have access to it today. A small point is in a divorce situation, where the wife now gets half the benefits of the Canada Pension Plan, which should have been the case all along. It is there, or will be, and voluntarily some of us have to do that. The fact that I am 57 and getting closer to 65 may mean that I have a vested interest in this.

I am worried about the costs that we may be imposing on the Canada Pension Plan, all of the people who pay into it, in order to meet all the commitments that both the Hon. Member and I would eventually like to see. I am afraid that if we try to bite off more now, it may have the impact of overloading the system with costs and we will not be able to meet the benefits that should be met today.

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the concern that was expressed by the Hon. Member was expressed to the task force on many occasions. There is a perception in the public that there is something drastically wrong or inadequate about the funding of the Canada Pension Plan. Our studies did not bear that out, but they did show that the percentage of payroll that would have to be contributed to the Canada Pension Plan over the years would have to be increased. By the year 2000, we anticipated it would go up to 8 per cent of payroll. That was why we said that the proposal we put forward with regard to the inclusion of homemakers in the Canada Pension Plan would be a contributory one, as with anybody else. If they contribute in the same way, they would not be asking any more or any less from the Canada Pension Plan than you or I. Nor would they contribute any less.

The question is, why should these people in Canada be treated as second-class citizens? That is what is happening at the present time with regard to the Canada Pension Plan and those who can participate in it. What we did was to make sure that this was actuarially possible. In all of the studies that we did and in everything we looked at, we were satisfied that this could be accomplished, but it would have to be on a contributory basis.

Mr. Bloomfield: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Hon. Member regarding her proposal. All of us in this House want to see our elderly taken care of in fine fashion. Can she give examples of other countries with better support programs for the elderly than Canada?

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I do not look at the needs of the elderly poor in this country in comparison with any other country. I really do not. If they are in genuine need, we have to do something about it. Whether there are better or worse situations in other countries should not be our major concern. Our major concern is, what are we going to do about our problems in Canada? That is the approach which the task force and people on this side of the House have taken.