

left to gather dust, while we still do not have a co-ordinated approach to the development of social policy. As I indicated at the commencement of my remarks, that is one of the reasons why I feel this resolution should commend itself to the House. It should commend itself to the House because surely the time has come when we must address all the problems which have been the subject of various studies and, quite frankly, will not go away.

I am referring to the problem of the single parent family, for example. It speaks to special housing policies which we should have devised to provide for single parent families that are on the increase in Canada as a result of changes in our society.

We have heard reference made to the problems of the elderly and the inadequacies of the present system to address those problems. Last week there was another increase in the cost of living. If one takes a look at the increases in the consumer price index over the years and compares them to the increases, for example, in the old age assistance program under the indexing provisions, one will find that the gap is growing wider and wider. Old people in this country are finding it more and more difficult to cope as inflation continues to be a serious problem. Of course there are the problems of working women and families where both spouses are required to work because of inflation.

Also there are income disparities between the sexes which have been the subject of a study by the Human Rights Commission. It speaks to inadequacies in the government service itself where we have allowed this injustice not only to continue but indeed it would seem as if we are condoning it by allowing, for example, a situation to develop in the public service where women are paid less for the same kind of work.

These are just some of the very many problems which I believe are important. Hopefully we will find the kind of co-ordination called for in this resolution to ensure that these problems are in fact addressed by the government.

I am concerned because the government has seen fit to give the responsibility for the co-ordination of social policy to a minister who, in my opinion, is already overworked. He has more to do than any minister should be expected to do, when one considers the responsibilities of constitutional renewal, the responsibilities of dealing with the provinces on revisions of the constitution, the responsibilities of federal-provincial relations, and the responsibilities in the administration of justice.

These are serious problems that we are talking about in this debate. We are talking about the problems of the working poor and the elderly. We are talking about the social plight of retired single women. We do not seem to be able to address it, although we have made a half-hearted attempt at it in terms of the spouse's allowance that I am pleased to say was one of the first bills introduced by the government of which I was a member.

We have not addressed the problems respecting the Canada Pension Plan. If my memory serves me correctly, an undertaking was made by the government over there that it would make it possible for the homemaking spouse, who, by and large,

happens to be the housewife, the mother of the family or the female spouse, to qualify for benefits under the Canada Pension Plan. In my view it would certainly go a long way down the road in addressing the problems faced by women as they reach retirement age. I recall a speech that was made most eloquently on this subject by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) during the Thirtieth Parliament. I can tell the House that we as a government were well under way to making provision for the homemaking spouse to qualify under the Canadian Pension Plan. We hear suggestions from time to time that the Canada Pension Plan itself is in trouble, that down the road, as more and more people retire and look to the plan for retirement benefits, it may not be able to deliver. On an actuarial basis I am told the plan is not in a very healthy condition.

The principal problem which concerns some of my colleagues and me is the very special relationship which must exist between the Minister of National Health and Welfare and the new minister of state for social development. I doubt very much whether we will have the opportunity before the seven hours lapse to hear from the minister, because I understand she is going to Newfoundland tomorrow where she will be participating in the opening ceremonies of the national meeting of the Canadian Council of Social Development. Perhaps we will have that opportunity when she once again appears before the committee, because I believe this is a problem that certainly should be addressed before we are called upon to vote on this resolution. In any event, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues let me say that we intend to support the resolution, with some of the reservations I have placed before the House.

* * *

● (2030)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN SPEAKER'S GALLERY OF FORMER QUEBEC MINISTER

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. Before I recognize the hon. parliamentary secretary I wonder if I might call upon all hon. members to recognize, as is the tradition in our House, a distinguished visitor now sitting in the Speaker's gallery, the former minister of consumer and corporate affairs for the province of Quebec, the Hon. Bill Tetley.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

* * *

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

DECREE RESPECTING ESTABLISHMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Pinard (for Mr. Trudeau):