

citizens, we can do it ten years from now or 20 years from now or 30 years from now, even if that portion is in many more dollars. If wages have doubled and if costs have doubled, I hope that pensions will have doubled as well.

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

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** What seems to bother the Colin Browns and the Geoffrey Calverts is that indexing seems to guarantee that the pensioners will continue to get a share of the wealth produced that is commensurate with the capacity of society at that day. Let us not be confused by these figures or by these assertions that we will go broke. Let us not be confused by those who say we are putting an unnecessary burden on our children and our grandchildren. We are simply saying that tomorrow's generation will be human beings, as we are, and will do the same thing that this generation is doing. We will decide what portion of the wealth we produce is to go to those who are working, what portion is to go to the children, and what portion is to go to our older people.

I am immensely proud of the progress we have made in this field since the day I came here, which the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Abbott) thought was in the last century. We have come a long way from that \$20 a month at age 70 with a means test. One of the tremendous improvements we have made is the Canada Pension Plan itself which, incidentally, is indexed. It is indexed while people are contributing to it on the basis of the wage index, and it is indexed after retirement on the basis of the Consumer Price Index. For a while there was a limit of 2 per cent per year, and then we accepted the proposition that it should be equal to the actual rise in the Consumer Price Index. It is a good scheme, and I see the day coming when it will have to be enlarged. Instead of just paying a pension of 25 per cent of the average of one's last three years, it will have to pay 40 per cent, 50 per cent or even more. I see this development taking the control of pensions away from those who sell pensions for benefit and cannot meet the need for all pensions to be indexed. I see the development bringing more of the security of our older people under the responsibility of the people as a whole in a greatly increased old age security pension and an improvement in the Canada Pension Plan itself.

To suggest that the Ontario government is saying no to this slight improvement for women, because it wants to take a look at the whole question of the funding of the Canada Pension Plan and all the rest, is a terribly backward step. No one has been more critical than I have of the slowness of the government across the way. The fact of the matter is that in the old age security system that we have built up, based on universality up to a point, and in the other stage—the Canada Pension Plan we have established—we have done well. I do not want to see it held back by the Colin Browns, the Geoffrey Calverts and the Ontario government who say we must not take even this little step without checking the whole pension system. It is a good scheme we have got. I think it is worthy of a lot better

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step forward than we are shown in this bill that is before us tonight.

To get back to the bill itself, as I said this afternoon when I began, it is like a good many bills we have to consider. It does not go far enough, but because it goes in the right direction we support it. I hope, as a member of this House, to see the day when we will establish women's rights on the basis of absolute equality. It is not good enough to say to the women of this country, "The kinds of pensions you will get will depend upon the man you have got or on your attachment to a male." Women should stand on their own feet. One of the ways to make that a reality is to say to the women who stayed in the home and made that a career that they are entitled to a pension equivalent to the Canada Pension Plan, just as much as the women who go out and work in industry.

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

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Let us not have the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare standing up, as he did this afternoon, to say that this is a major step forward. It is only a slight step forward. Because of that, I shall vote for it. But I hope to see the day, as a member of this House, when we go all the way and accord to women pension rights that are equal across the board—rights in their own stead. Only then will there be pension equality between men and women.

● (2120)

[Translation]

**Mr. C. A. Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, in order to give an unbiassed opinion on Bill C-49, as a preliminary comment and for the enlightenment of *Hansard* readers, allow me first to quote the beginning of the departmental press release.

Today in the House of Commons the Minister of National Health and Welfare, Mr. Marc Lalonde, has introduced amendments to the Canada Pension Plan the purpose of which is to recognize the role of working parents at home.

Those important changes were discussed during the federal-provincial review on social security which ended in June 1976 and were stated in the last Speech from the Throne.

The two main amendments are meant to provide some recognition and a measure of financial security to working spouses at home while keeping the same basic provisions of the plan: contributory, compulsory and related to incomes.

The first of the amendments will enable the equal splitting of CPP benefits acquired during the marriage between the husband and wife in case of divorce or annulment.

Pension credits would be equally divided, regardless of the amount of direct contributions paid by the husband or wife.

As a result, the assets accumulated during the marriage years would be divided equally when the marriage is dissolved.

Spouses having never worked outside the home and therefore having never contributed directly to the Canada Pension Plan, as well as those who contributed only for a short period of time, would be entitled to share the pension credits acquired by the husband or wife, by their contributions to the plan.

The division of credits acquired during the marriage years since the establishment of the plan in 1966 would be done on demand by either spouse within the three years following the marriage dissolution.

Further, the marriage would have to be dissolved after the amendment has come into force and the marriage would have lasted three years. The spouses would have lived together for at least three consecutive years.