

• (1220)

I would really like to bring this area of contribution rate changes to the attention of the Minister. He knows that there will be a .2 per cent increase of pensionable earnings each year until 1991; however, there will be a drop of 2.15 per cent. I wonder why we should be facing a slippage in that area, from 1992 to 2001, instead of maintaining this same rate or even gradually, fractionally, increasing it in order to give strength to the fund and permit certain improvements that Canadians expect from their Canada Pension Plan.

Moving on to the subject of pension for older single women, as the Hon. Member Sudbury has pointed out on a number of occasions in committee and at second reading, we do support the Cofirentes formula or approach, because we see there a potential for strengthening the regime to protect older single women. We would therefore urge the Minister to explore that in a manner that will result in amendments in the next Bill that hopefully will see the light of day in the next session. We do favour the model that has emerged under the name of Cofirentes, and we do see there an approach that has potential.

Where we have a disappointment, as I am sure many Canadians do, and this is where the critical and concluding part of my intervention begins, it is that there is no provision in the Bill for homemakers. I can assure Your Honour and the Minister that there are many women who are engaged in highly productive and useful work at home who are desperately waiting for the day when an announcement on this measure will be made. We realize how cumbersome the process is, but it did start by way of an analysis of the potential for homemakers three years ago.

We really must register on the floor of the House the legitimate aspiration on the part of many, many women across the country who have never taken up conventional employment, by way of a job with an employer, with contributory payments being made, eventually resulting in CPP payment, but who, as the Minister knows as well as I do, have worked for years in a variety of ways at home within the family. These women when they reach age 60 or more find no tangible recognition given to them by society for having made a contribution, because this contribution somehow did not take the form of deductions. Here there is a social injustice which I do not think has any party connotation. It is a burden that we all share, one we must face and one for which we must find an answer.

Some four months ago, on a radio program concerning homemakers' pensions, I just touched on it—not very much in depth, I must admit. I was astounded at the volume of mail in response in subsequent weeks. It really touched what we could term in political words as being a raw nerve. Therefore, from a political point of view, in the best meaning of the word "political", we have here an issue that we must address, no matter what the cost.

A number of suggestions have come forward from NAC, from labour, from a number of organizations, from party

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platforms. I think the party platforms of all three Parties in the House are saturated with suggestions on homemakers' pensions, as well, so the time is overripe for taking action. I hope the Minister will use his term in office to engrave his name in stone, virtually, by being the one to bring in the homemakers' pension. He will go down to eternity because of that.

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** "Eternity."—hopefully it's up and not the other way.

**Mr. Caccia:** Go up; sorry. The Hon. Minister is quite right. There is nothing that really touches the sentiments of a family, particularly concerning women, but also men, than to suddenly see a member of the family who has worked all her life not being covered because of reasons that are unexplainable. We are now in the year 1986. The issue is overripe, as I said. The input has been made by a number of organizations as well as political parties. An answer must be found.

Finally, on the question of flexible retirement, I can only report to Your Honour and to the Minister that people from where I come are simply furious about this measure. They feel that it is not fair to have a reduction of pension by any amount when entering their sixties, particularly those who are engaged in heavy duty work. A portion of the population is engaged in such work. You name it, construction, mining, fishing, farming or forestry. These are people who, upon reaching the age of their sixties, are physically worn out and look forward to an early retirement. It is from them that this cry of anguish comes, saying, "Look, why should we be penalized by 30 per cent?"

I submit to Your Honour and to the Minister that the route to go is to introduce the possibility of retiring at the age of 60 at the same rate. There will be those who will not want to retire at that age because they are productive and do not see themselves as being ready for that; but there are others who will. To impose, so to say, a penalty or a reduction of 30 per cent is not acceptable. That sentiment, with which I fully concur, comes mainly from people who are not engaged in white-collar activities, but rather from those engaged in heavy duty work, from a certain number who feel that they have just physically had it. They want to quit. They say, "Why should we be penalized by 30 per cent?"

I would like to encourage the Minister to look at this question of early retirement at the same pension rate, in conjunction with long-term policies of the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald). This matter has to be seen in a broader context, namely, one that relates to incentives, if one wishes, to retire from the labour force, perhaps in order to make room for those who are in the younger age levels. This should therefore be seen as a social measure which, however, has employment potential and, therefore, an over-all governmental significance, perhaps going well beyond the scope of the Department of National Health and Welfare. Maybe then the argument of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) could be a stronger