

*Canada Pension Plan*

major occupation, but over 4½ million Canadian women are classified in this category, which is about one-fifth of our total population. While I recognize the contribution of the 10,000 males in this regard, the reality of the situation is that 99.8 per cent of the persons who work in the home are women. My major concern is for this group of people in our society. When the Canada Pension Plan was introduced back in 1964, it set out to provide benefits for contributors. The words of the act read as follows:

—establish a comprehensive program of old age pensions and supplementary benefits in Canada payable to and in respect of contributors.

The key word is “contributors”. One particular group of Canadians, women who work in the home and who contribute to the social and economic well being of this country, are not contributors to the Canada Pension Plan, nor are they permitted to be contributors to that plan. They are excluded from that opportunity. We have just heard the Minister of National Health and Welfare say that they are excluded from that opportunity. I ask the minister, is this what he calls social justice in this country? Just recently this House passed a human rights bill. With the following noble words the human rights bill was introduced:

Every individual should have an equal opportunity with other individuals to make for himself or herself the life that he or she is able and wishes to have, consistent with his or her duties and obligations as a member of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex or marital status—

I contend that women who work in the home do not have, in the words of the human rights bill, an equal opportunity with other individuals to make for themselves the life that they are able and wish to have, when they are denied the opportunity to contribute to the Canada Pension Plan.

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

**Miss MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, I will call it one o'clock.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Order, please. It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock later this day.

At one o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

**Miss MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, at the time of the luncheon adjournment I had been trying to impress upon the minister that women who work in the home do not have, within the terms of the human rights bill, an equal opportunity with other individuals to make for themselves the life that they are able and wish to have, when such persons are denied the opportunity to contribute to the Canada Pension Plan. I contend very strongly that housewives should have this right. It is a principle that should be respected as a right of an individual in our society—a right that is basic to that particular individual and

[Miss MacDonald.]

not because the person is attached to another member of our society as some sort of chattel or appendage.

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

**Mr. Paproski:** Lalonde, you male chauvinist.

**Miss MacDonald:** She should have the right to contribute, as do all other productive members of society. But at present she is denied that right. Faced with Bill C-49, I have to ask myself whether the intent of the Canada Pension Plan does not, indeed, abuse the principle stated in the human rights bill. Perhaps I go a little too far when I say that the way in which the Canada Pension Plan presently operates violates human rights, but this could be settled definitively if some woman who works in the home would challenge it in the courts. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to encourage such a woman who does work in the home to take her case to contribute to the Canada Pension Plan to the courts and have it decided in that way.

I would like to say to the minister that in his remarks before the luncheon adjournment I feel that he misrepresented very seriously the position of the former hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway in her support of the purpose and the principle that I have been stating.

**Mr. McGrath:** Shame on you.

**Miss MacDonald:** In consideration of this bill during second reading and in committee, there were two matters that struck me. The first was the matter of voluntary contributions to the Canada Pension Plan by persons working in the home. That subject was raised during debate on second reading, it was raised in committee, and it was dealt with here by the minister, with lack of sensitivity. I know that he said he found the proposal to be attractive on the surface, but that is the whole problem. The minister looks at this in a superficial way. He passed it off—would not deal with it himself—to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Paproski:** Just listen—écoutez.

**Mr. McGrath:** How are you going to defend this on the hustings?

**Miss MacDonald:** The minister referred the matter, since he could not come to grips with it himself, to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and, as he stated, for certain reasons they rejected it. I must say that I have read their report and I am deeply disappointed in their findings. I have not been persuaded by any of their arguments. The reasons and objections they set out—as were the ones that the minister put forward this morning—had to do with the mechanics of making voluntary contributions operative, rather than with the justice of the case.

**Mr. McGrath:** It is an elitist report.