

### *Government Orders*

I feel that in spite of all the changes for the better in a women's status in this country, we are still in the Dark Ages in many ways. After nearly 30 years of marriage my husband left me after losing everything we had worked for over most of my lifetime.

The court awarded this woman a part of her husband's RCMP pension, but if he dies the pension dies with him and the woman he has been living with gets the survivor's pension. There is nothing for the woman who has raised his three children and had been with him for most of his life. She will get nothing at all.

This woman is now in her later years and loses out for the time that she helped him to earn that pension. The issue of survivor's benefits, which is among the most important of all pension issues, is not really addressed in this bill. It is not addressed at all.

It is appalling that a person can be deemed dead when their ex-partner dies and then they lose any benefits. This is what this legislation does.

I have heard particularly from women whose spouses are in the Armed Forces. They tell me this is a very stressful life which does contribute to marriage breakdown. The woman is sometimes left alone to raise children for long periods of time. Why is there so little recognition of this role that women play, this work that women do for many years in their lives?

More and more women these days have paid jobs outside the home. Yet when a woman follows her husband throughout the world, in many countries it is difficult for her to find a job. The women who suffer most are those of the older generation, many of whom did no paid work and have no pension in their own names. These older women are the ones who will not benefit at all from this new legislation.

I have also been told by women of problems with the Garnishment, Attachment and Pension Diversion Act. One woman was abused by her husband for 23 years. She left him but she has been unable to collect her support under that bill. She receives half of her husband's pension whenever he feels like sending it. What limited money she receives will stop when he dies.

One of the New Democrat amendments would have remedied this situation by imposing a trust on the

pension plan so that when it is split, half of the pension is paid out to the spouse directly from the pension plan on time and until her death, not his if he predeceases her. The government again used its majority to defeat this amendment.

The many women who have written to me and to the ministers are forced to open up every detail of their own personal lives in the hope this government will show them some compassion. I sometimes feel like I am banging my head against a brick wall when trying to deal with the government. I get letters and I have conversations with these women and they share the pain, agony, and humiliation they feel. I know the government side gets the same letters, because often the letters I receive have been carbon copied to me that have gone to a minister. Not one of these women who have talked of their divorces or their abuse or other aspects of their personal situations to complete strangers who have power over them will benefit from this bill.

I think that is a travesty. This lack of attention to this matter in the bill certainly does figure prominently in my decision about whether or not to support it.

**Mr. Ian Waddell (Port Moody—Coquitlam):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on an especially excellent speech in that she dealt with specific cases of real people who are affected by this legislation or actually have not been helped by the legislation.

• (2020 )

I noticed she referred to an act concerning garnisheed wages. I thought maybe I would just expand on that a little bit. I used to prosecute some of these cases in the courts where money would have to be collected, usually from the husband, so I am somewhat familiar with this matter.

I will translate this into the actual facts. What happens, and it happened more in the past but it is still happening, the husband was out working and the wife stayed home looking after the children. They would get divorced, the assets would be split and she would get half of his pension and that was a big fight.

**An hon. member:** Not here, not in this bill.