

*Canada Pension Plan*

related pension plan, a plan which is related to earnings from employment. I suggest there is a way this can be done and that it would meet the problem we are dealing with today much better than this bill does. It would deal with those cases the hon. member for Hamilton West talked about, persons who stay at home to look after an ailing parent or an ailing spouse.

What business is it of the state to pick and choose among the reasons why a person stays home? What business is it of the state to say this is an idealistic thing that you do, and this is not? I suggest that we should go for a form of universality. We should provide that every person between the ages that apply in the Canada Pension Plan, the 47-year period between 18 and 65, who is not employed and is not contributing to the Canada Pension Plan should get a certain percentage of credit toward a supplement to his old age security, a certain percentage for each year he is not a CPP contributor. Although the specific percentage I am suggesting is not the point to hang on, it is the idea, and I am suggesting that the figure should be 2 per cent per year.

**Mr. Lalonde:** To be contributed?

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Without contribution. I am suggesting there are 47 years between ages 18 and 65. That is the compulsory period for contributing to the Canada Pension Plan. Every person is allowed to drop out 15 per cent. Fifteen per cent of 47 years is just a fraction over seven years, which means that the remaining portion is almost 40 years.

A housewife and mother who stayed home all that time, or a male person, for any reason whatsoever, should get a credit of 2 per cent for each of those years up to the 40 as an addition to his or her old age security. In other words, the nice, good, old-fashioned wife who stays home the whole time, raises the children, looks after the old man, and generally behaves as good Canadian wives and mothers used to behave, would have an 80 per cent, 40 years times two, supplement, without a means test, added to her old age security.

Therefore, at the point of retirement, the husband would have his old age security and the Canada Pension Plan to which he contributed. The wife would have her old age security and an 80 per cent addition because of the contribution she had made to Canadian society, the Canadian economy, the Canadian life, by being a Canadian wife and mother at home. For shorter periods without making contributions, the supplement would be lower. Do not smile about this. Do not laugh about it. I suggest it is the kind of sensible proposal the government ought to consider.

I do not agree with at least half the criticisms advanced today by the hon. member for Hamilton West, but he did have a point. He said it is unfair to grant this consideration to the woman who stays home to look after the children, but not to the woman who stays home to look after an ailing husband or ailing parent. If you try to bring in various categories, you will do nothing but get into trouble. However, I suggest there is a way along the lines I have proposed to see that everyone's contribution to our economy gets recognized.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

I am back to the basic point that underlines all that I want to say this afternoon. I am not going to go into the kind of details that the previous speaker did. I think for the most part the details that are in the bill implement correctly what the bill is trying to do. However, I quarrel with the fundamental assertion by the Minister of National Health and Welfare made by his parliamentary secretary that this measure is a major step forward in the recognition of the role that women who stay in the home play in our economy.

● (1650)

As I have said, look at the pensions of veterans' wives and widows, the pensions of widows of Canadian National employees, or of members of parliament or of public servants. In all cases they are not pensions that are given to them in their own right as persons. They are given to them because they can say, "he was my man". If this is a day of equal rights, if we proclaim it in legislation and in fine oratory, I suggest it is time to move in that direction. Yes, this bill moves in that direction but it does so hesitatingly. It does only two things: it says that if there is a marriage breakdown, the assets can be split 50-50, and it says that in the case of a woman who has an attachment to the outside labour force and has an attachment again later, we will give back to her certain credits that were taken away from her under the legislation as it stood.

I am quite prepared to vote for this bill. As I say, I have been voting for decades for pieces of legislation that did not go far enough but moved in the right direction. This one does that, and I hope that in committee we can have some useful discussion about it.

If I may indulge in something that might seem a bit light, let me say that this bill raises another problem. In addition to being a stickler for the rules of this place, I am a stickler for the rules of grammar. I shudder sometimes at some of the errors that I hear in the House, but they are usually corrected in *Hansard*. One rule that really bothers me is the rule that he or his includes she or her, but the reverse does not apply. I wrote a letter to the president of CBC a while ago—I do not do it very often; I do not complain about the so-called bias of CBC—about a professor whom I had heard, who turned out to be a professor of English, making a speech in which he used the phrase "everybody and their dog". That is a pretty common error. It should be "everybody and his dog", even if the "everybody" happened to be a woman. The rule I mentioned is in the Interpretation Act. It states that his includes her and he includes she.

In this bill we are talking about the person who stays at home, the family allowance recipient. In 95 per cent of the cases we talk about the woman, the mother, but all through the piece it refers to he and his. It is clumsy to use the his or her expression—I do not go for it at all—and I would certainly not consent to using the word "their" because we are talking in the singular.

Maybe the time has come for us to amend the Interpretation Act and where in that act we say that his includes her and he includes she, we should write the reverse and say that she