

tary contributions to the Canada Pension Plan and, in effect, every provincial minister around the table with whom we discussed the matter rejected this approach to amending the Canada Pension Plan at the present time.

I remember that the former member for Vancouver-Kingsway, a very remarkable woman, made a great contribution in this House to the cause of women and social equity. She studied the question extensively herself, and during the last few meetings that we had while she was sitting in the House—this is reported in the debates of the parliamentary committee studying the matter at the time—she indicated, having examined the matter extensively for several years, that she had come to the conclusion that the Canada Pension Plan was probably not the proper vehicle to achieve such a purpose. I think it is a tribute to the sense of fairness, perceptiveness and knowledge of this eminent lady that she herself had come to that particular conclusion.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, may I recall to the House that the Canada Pension Plan Act requires that the endorsement of provinces with at least two-thirds the population be obtained to amend the act. We have been able to obtain the endorsement of all the provinces to the first major proposal contained in this bill, and the province of Quebec is amending its plan in a parallel way to the proposals contained in this bill. As a matter of fact, the second proposal is one which was initiated at the beginning by the province of Quebec and endorsed by all other provinces except Ontario.

In view of the difficulties we have had with the provinces and between the provinces in arriving at a consensus on the amendments before us, one can imagine the almost insurmountable difficulties that would arise in the sense that there would be no support at all from provincial governments for an amendment dealing with the voluntary contribution of spouses at home at the present time. It would appear that the Advisory Council on the Status of Women was very concerned about this particular issue and is continuing to examine it further to ascertain what are the most appropriate solutions to the type of questions raised in terms of social equity and justice, and also in terms of ensuring equity and fairness particularly to women in society. They have come to the conclusion, after having studied the matter quite independently and objectively, that this technique of voluntary contribution was not the appropriate one to achieve this particular purpose.

These are the comments that I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, as we consider third reading of this bill. May I thank hon. members both in committee and in the House on second reading for having supported the bill, and I thank all opposition parties for endorsing the provisions contained in the bill.

[*Translation*]

I also want to thank hon. members for the constructive suggestions advanced in committee related to rectifying errors in a person's contributory period. My department will explore, in cooperation with the Department of National Revenue, the alternative ways in which CPP contributors could be informed of their right to receive statements of their contributory records.

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In conclusion, I might note that Bill C-49 also contains a few smaller amendments which will enhance the operations of the CPP and provide fairer treatment of contributors under the plan. I am thinking here, in particular, of the provision to pay retroactive CPP retirement pensions to contributors under age 70 and the removal of the current limitations on benefits payable to orphans and to dependent children of disabled CPP contributors. Mr. Speaker, I thank hon. members for their considerate attention and I hope the bill will be supported by all parties.

[*English*]

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, this bill has been before the House and the committee for a relatively short period of time. Therefore, I welcome this opportunity to take part in a debate concerning its provisions. I am particularly pleased to hear the remarks of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) and to follow him in the comments I wish to make. As he has said, Bill C-49, an act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, appears to have the approval of all parties in this House, albeit, as I am sure he will recognize, with some reluctance regarding certain of its provisions. However, I cannot let this occasion pass without registering my deep and abiding anger at this government that once again we are faced with legislation in this House which discriminates against the rights of a certain group of Canadian citizens, namely, women who work in the home.

● (1250)

The minister can sit there and shake his head, indicating that he does not agree with that statement, but I should like to tell him that that is the result of this bill. I recognize the benefits of the bill. I recognize that in a limited fashion it reduces certain inequities, but let me say to the minister that it is a bitter disappointment to those of us whose expectations were raised last fall as we listened to the words of the Speech from the Throne. Those words were misleading, and I remind him what was said at that time:

You will be asked to consider amendments to the Canada Pension Plan which would further recognize the value of the contribution made to the family and society by both marriage partners, in the event that one remains at home to raise children while their partner works outside the home.

Many of us understood from those words that in amending the provisions of the Canada Pension Plan the government would implement a very fundamental and heretofore totally neglected principle, namely, that women, no matter where they work, are contributors to society and their rights as individuals to contribute to and benefit from the Canada Pension Plan, as indeed from all comprehensive social programs, would be guaranteed under law. Whatever else this bill accomplishes, it does not address itself to that principle. That is what was indicated in the Speech from the Throne.

First of all, I want to make it very clear why I refer to women when dealing with the rights of those who work in the home. I have looked at the most recent statistics and I know they indicate that some 10,000 males list housework as their