

Senator Lynch-Staunton: I know that I saw it more than once.

Senator Molgat: I wonder if you might give us the details as to when it was shown on Radio-Canada?

Senator Lynch-Staunton: If the records are still available, certainly.

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc: Honourable senators, my question is supplementary to that of Senator Molgat's.

It would be interesting to know not only how many times it was repeated but the names of the programs on which it was used. It was my observation that it was not used exclusively in what I would call information, news and public affairs programs.

CANADA PENSION PLAN FAMILY ALLOWANCE ACT OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. John Lynch-Staunton, for Hon. Thérèse Lavoie-Roux, moved the third reading of Bill C-39, to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Family Allowances Act and the Old Age Security Act.

Hon. Lorna Marsden: Honourable senators, before this bill receives third reading, I wonder if I may take this opportunity to speak for my side on the bill.

My party has agreed that delaying the payment provided through this bill for children of people with disabilities would be unacceptable, and indeed I would not want to contribute to such a delay.

On the other hand, the bill has grave problems in at least two areas which I believe the Senate should consider.

Honourable senators will have read Bill C-280, which has been received in this chamber, and which the government is not very fond of, but which got through the House of Commons, and so it should have. Bill C-280 amends the Canada Pension Plan, as does the bill that is under consideration now. Bill C-280 amends it to provide additional protection for the disabled.

I recommend this bill to you, but the moral of the bill and the process through which it has come are also very important. Bill C-39, the bill we are being asked to pass now, neglected the situation of people with disabilities in ways it should not have done. There is a time limit on applying for disability pensions, the only CPP benefit which has that stipulation. How could Bill C-39 pass the other place without this being changed? Thankfully, Bill C-280 provides us with an opportunity to rectify that situation.

No such rectifying legislation has come from the Commons to change the situation of another group of Canadians who are badly disadvantaged by the current CPP scheme. I am referring to old women living in poverty. It used to be that the largest group of people in poverty in Canada were the old

[Senator Frith.]

people. The guaranteed income supplement and the old age pension and the CPP have improved that situation. However, if you look at poverty statistics in this country, there is still a very large number of people in old age in poverty. The majority of them are single women, unattached women, divorced or widowed women, but most particularly divorced women.

All senators are familiar with the financial constraints that arise on the situation of divorce. Indeed, senators ought to be, because the Senate of Canada was one of the first and early great advocates of divorce reform in Canada, principally I believe because the Senate had to pass individual divorce cases for many years. An entire Senate committee was devoted to hearing the details of divorce cases which were then passed individually as Acts of Parliament. The history of the Senate and its concern for divorce is an interesting one. It illustrates the extent to which senators, of both parties, of all religious backgrounds, and of both genders, urged divorce reform in the 1950s and 1960s, and indeed much earlier.

Having achieved considerable divorce reform in 1968 and subsequently, and property law reform in the provinces as a consequence thereof, we come to the economic situation of the spouses upon divorce and separation now.

There is still in this country a generation of women who did not enter the paid labour force for the same number of years as men and who did not accrue benefits under the Canada Pension Plan. In general, the expectation was that they would retire with their husbands. Both of them would then be supported by pension arrangements, including pension benefits from CPP. However, if a divorce occurred, the husband's pension credits went with the husband, or rather the earner's credits went with the person who had earned them, and that was almost always the husband. The wives were left without those pension benefits.

After many years of agitation, the situation was changed so that CPP credits could be split upon divorce. This is important in two instances. It is important for the spouse who has not accumulated pension credits to survive in his or her old age, but it is particularly important when the partner with the CPP credits remarries and upon his or her death leaves those credits with the new spouse. Even during life, they can split those credits with a new spouse. The discarded spouse, as that person is unfortunately referred to, is left without those pension credits.

Hon. Royce Frith (Leader of the Opposition): Where is the person referred to as a "discarded spouse"?

Senator Marsden: In the official literature, you will find "the discarded spouse".

For all intents and purposes, the people with the CPP benefits are men. Those left without sufficient support in their old age are women.

We are told in a recent article published by Statistics Canada that younger women, women generally speaking younger than I, who enter the labour force and who work on average as many years as men, will not suffer the same fate as