

Disabled Persons Act

many years. The present resolution, therefore, should come as no surprise. We are not proceeding without due notice, nor are we ramming anything down parliament's throat as has been suggested.

Some hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Pearson: Now, for the first time in our history, parliament is being asked to decide this matter—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson:—and parliament will decide it, one way or the other.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: I have also given pledges to parliament since the election of 1963—pledges in parliament. On November 12, 1963 the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) asked me a question with regard to representations I had been receiving from the Royal Canadian Legion on the flag issue, and in the course of my reply I stated:

I repeated to them, however—

The reference is to the Royal Canadian Legion.

—the commitment that this government had entered into for the production through parliament of a Canadian national flag within two years of being elected.

The Leader of the Opposition then asked:

Would the Prime Minister say whether such a flag will come before parliament, or simply be declared by way of order in council to be the national flag of Canada?

I replied that it would be a matter for parliament's decision. And it is.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: On February 24, 1964, in answer to a question asked in this house I repeated that parliament should certainly be put in a position to decide for or against a particular flag. Parliament is now being put in that position.

May I call it five o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: It being five o'clock, the house will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely notices of motions.

DISABLED PERSONS ACT**AMENDMENTS CONCERNING PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CONDITIONS**

Mr. Heber E. Smith (Simcoe North) moved:

That, in the opinion of this house, the government should give consideration to the advisability of enlarging the definition of a disabled person in

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the Disabled Persons Act, and the regulations pursuant thereto, to take into consideration such factors as the physical condition, the mental condition and the age of the applicant, and other factors which create a condition of permanent unemployment.

He said: While the business which has just preceded this private members' hour has generated a great deal of heat, I am not so sure that the matter now to be discussed is not equally important and deserving of the consideration of parliament.

It was just a year and a few days ago that I first brought a resolution before the house asking the government to consider an extension of the definition of the word "disabled" under the Disabled Persons Act.

At that time it was suggested by the hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Ryan) that such a course of action would be followed. We have waited a year, but the action has not come. A year ago I said there were four things which ought to be considered. The first would be the physical condition of the person concerned; the second would be the mental condition, the third would be the age and the fourth would be any permanent unemployability which might flow from the first three conditions. If the government does not change its mind—and that is a broad assumption to make; I cannot be sure this is government policy yet, because I have not heard the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) give official approval—some small steps are to be taken along the lines I have suggested. These are reflected in communications dealing with the Canada pensions act and the definition of disability for disability benefits. The proposal is as follows:

The general intention is to recognize those medical impairments in which disability is so prolonged and severe that the person is unable to secure substantial gainful employment. He need not be completely helpless to be unable to engage in substantial gainful activity.

If the government persists in this proposed definition it will certainly have my support. I should like to see them carry that definition into the Disabled Persons Act; and I mean carry it into the act now, not next year or in 1971, when the disability benefits under the proposed Canada pension plan commence.

Even if the Canada pension plan is enacted there will still be severe limitations on the pensions of those who are disabled. In the first place, the benefits, as I read the proposal, do not start until 1971 in the case of disabled people, which is still some six or seven years away. The second class of people who will not benefit are those who never become eligible