

Vocational Rehabilitation

I wish I could see more activity in this area of research. I hope that one of the activities which will be carried on as a result of the passing of the legislation which will arise from this resolution will be a full scale attempt to find out not only what various groups of disabled can do, but exactly what jobs will be available in the economy of the 1970's and 1980's for these people.

The resolution ends with the suggestion that a national advisory council be set up. I think the Minister of Labour has already told us that this exists. I hope that sufficient professional personnel will be gathered in this national advisory council. I have the greatest admiration for those who work in the area of vocation rehabilitation, but sometimes I think we are overwhelmed by the cult of the amateur. I think helping the disabled is an area in which we need a great deal of professional assistance.

We took a great stride in our democratic system when we recognized that disabled people needed our help financially. We took another great stride when we realized that we should do everything in our power to help them lead a normal life. The third stride we must take on their behalf and on behalf of an even more efficient national economy is to remember that these people must have an opportunity to contribute to the fullest extent to the economy of the nation, thereby being able to contribute in a real way to the society in which they live.

I can assure the minister that this group will support these recommendations. We will support them in the hope that they will provide a more effective answer to the problem of vocational rehabilitation in Canada than we have today.

(Translation):

Mr. Seigny: Mr. Chairman, I should like to say a few words about the resolution now before the house. This resolution is altogether necessary considering the needs of the disabled persons in our country, those who unfortunately, for some reason, are afflicted with a disease that prevents them from finding a job as easily as those enjoying perfect health.

There is surely nothing so distressing as the sight of a very intelligent and talented man or woman having difficulty in finding a job, only because employers are rather reluctant to employ a handicapped person without any formal training. This is why it is absolutely essential to give help to those who unfortunately, through some congenital condition or otherwise, are afflicted with a disability which prevents them from holding in life the position they deserve by their intelligence or other talents.

It is certain that for the morale of those people, it would be very useful to teach them a trade that would enable them to fill an important position within society. It is all the more important as those who will be disabled in the future, following an accident or for some other reason, will, upon entering this new phase in their life, find immediate comfort in the thought that others like themselves suffering from some disability have been able, by means of a trade they learned, to find a place for themselves in our modern life.

The provinces will be responsible for providing those rehabilitation courses, for giving the training that will enable the disabled persons and other outcasts of fortune to learn a trade. May I be permitted to suggest that those who will attend to this in the provinces consider what was done in this field in France, in England and more particularly in Germany.

It is common knowledge today that, as a result of the calamitous second world war, millions of civilians in Europe were wounded, during bombardments or following the invasion of European territories.

In Germany, especially, millions of citizens lost a limb or became paralysed, and this deprived post-war Germany of manpower which it certainly needed for its rehabilitation and reconstruction. But then the country had the good fortune of seeing a genius rise in its midst, Ludwig Erdhart, who gave his country an economic program which allowed it to recover and to attain the enviable position it enjoys today. Well, part of the program designed by Erdhart and his lieutenants was directed toward the rehabilitation of the disabled who could not as easily find jobs as those who, luckily, were in perfect health.

A rehabilitation and retraining program was put into operation, if I am not mistaken, more or less around 1947. Through this scheme, a very high percentage of the disabled civilians who were then unemployed are now usefully employed in the industries of their respective countries.

I think the provincial governments would be wise to send people to those European countries to study the programs which have been put to the test over the past 15 years; I am sure this could be very useful and would help us to improve the measure that is being put forward. Surely, this measure is of exceptional merit and will be supported by every hon. member in this house.