

equipment and the training of personnel. The crippled children's grant encouraged the organization of crippled children's societies. In addition, programs such as the Old Age Assistance Act were set up to assist the disabled financially. That act gave assistance to blind persons as early as 1937. This program was followed by the Blind Persons Act, the Disabled Persons Act and the Unemployment Assistance Act.

As Canada evolved it was felt that these programs were too restrictive, had little flexibility and did not provide for services to alleviate dependency. For these reasons the Canada Assistance Plan was introduced in 1966. The government was also interested in vocational rehabilitation. In 1952 it established the vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons program, first under order in council then as a separate piece of legislation. It permits the provinces to provide the disabled with a comprehensive program of services which are necessary to assist disabled persons to become employable, thus enabling them to become integrated with society. In 1973 this program was transferred from the Department of Manpower and Immigration to the Department of National Health and Welfare because it was felt that this would permit closer co-ordination of services to the handicapped, particularly in view of the welfare services provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan.

I recognize the interest of the hon. member for Brandon-Souris in the area of technical aids for the disabled, and will therefore begin my remarks on the subject which is closest to his heart. As I mentioned, the government has had a continuing interest over the years in the needs of the disabled, and the Department of National Health and Welfare has been particularly interested in the area of technical aids. We sponsored a Canadian conference on technology and the handicapped in March, 1973, at which the hon. member was a keynote dinner speaker. Various recommendations of this conference dealt with the need for a national information centre. We are presently supporting a feasibility study for such a centre undertaken by the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled and the Centre for Applied Research and Engineering Design at McMaster University—a university which, as the hon. member will realize, is close to my heart.

**Mr. Dinsdale:** I am a graduate of McMaster.

**Mr. MacFarlane:** In addition, we supported an electronic control seminar last August at which the hon. member made the opening remarks. This conference acquainted participants with the various electronic aids available. Through the prosthetic services division we are concerned with the manufacture of artificial limbs, braces and orthopaedic shoes and we provide fitting services for these devices. The production, engineering, testing and training unit tests appliances and components developed in various research centres across the country and develops them for general use.

We also provide consultant services on all aspects of prosthetics and orthopaedics to provincial governments and agencies, to commercial and institutional organizations and to clinics. More recently, we have undertaken to put TOSC into production. This is the touch-operated selector control for persons who have limited use of all limbs. It was developed, as the hon. member mentioned in

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this House last year, by Mr. Bud Cairns, a quadraplegic. By use of two remote switches, the handicapped person can request assistance, use an intercom system, unlock a door, receive and make phone calls and control appliances, including radio, TV, lights and dictating machine.

This has been an exciting development and has been acclaimed as one of the breakthroughs which will permit the severely disabled to leave institutions and live with some independence. These units are now being disseminated throughout Canada, one to a province, in co-operation with the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled and, I understand, the Canadian Paraplegic Association.

The hon. member is also aware of our interest in the national technical aids committee of the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled of which he is the chairman. This committee is representative of Canadian experts including scientists, engineers, physicians, federal and provincial government officials and agency personnel. We have funded a meeting of this committee in order to gain a better understanding of this complex question and to assist in preparing guidelines on the financing of special devices, some of which are very expensive.

For the benefit of other hon. members here this afternoon who may not be as aware of the technology which is assisting with the everyday problems of the disabled as is the hon. member for Brandon-Souris, I should like to mention a few devices: they include communication aids for the speech-impaired, environmental controls, such as TOSC, and wheelchair designs incorporating new, lightweight alloys. There is even a device available to enable a blind person to read regular print.

The problem lies in the lack of co-ordinated prescription, production and delivery systems for this hardware. Inventors seem to be developing these aids with little knowledge of each other. This is indeed unfortunate as the whole area of modern technology holds great promise for increasing the life, skills, independence and employability of the physically disabled. What is needed now in a co-ordinated approach to the development and delivery of technical aids, and this is the reason we are supporting the consultations with the members of CRCDC technical aids committee.

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The great majority of handicapped aspire to be as normal as possible. This desire is expressed most frequently in terms of employment. The work ethic is alive and well and living among the handicapped. It expresses itself in a rejection of inertia, a rejection of make-work activities, a rejection of unnecessary sheltered employment, a desire for training and placement in regular jobs. The brief submitted to the provincial ministers of welfare by the national steering committee of the physically disabled, a group of disabled persons, also reaffirms the right of the disabled to employment as a means of obtaining income but also as a means of self-expression and integration into the community.

There was a great example of this last Saturday. A blind student I had seen at McMaster for three years was able to make his way around the campus. Although not a member of my constituency, he arrived at my office last Saturday.