

*Disabled Persons Act*  
**DISABLED PERSONS ACT**

AMENDMENTS TO INCREASE PAYMENTS AND  
ALLOWABLE INCOME

**Hon. J. W. Monteith (Minister of National Health and Welfare)** moved that the house go into committee to consider the following resolution:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to amend the Disabled Persons Act to increase to sixty five dollars per month the maximum amount of allowance in respect of which payments may be made to the provinces under the provisions of that act, and to increase the total amount of allowable income, inclusive of allowance, by one hundred and eighty dollars a year in the case of an unmarried person and three hundred and sixty dollars a year in the case of a married person.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee, Mr. Martineau in the chair.

**Mr. Monteith (Perth):** As in the case of the other assistance programs, Mr. Chairman, we are proposing two changes in the Disabled Persons Act, namely an increase in maximum benefit to \$65 a month and an increase in income ceilings of \$180 a year for a single person and \$360 a year in the case of a married person.

With respect to the increase in income ceilings, I would draw the committee's attention to the fact that in this resolution also the proposed new levels are higher than would be necessary to give recipients the full benefit of the increase in pension payments. As is the case with old age assistance and blindness allowances, the new ceilings will provide an added advantage to recipients over and above the increased pension payments.

Mr. Chairman, the changes now being proposed are aimed at further improving a program which has proved of great benefit to thousands of persons across the country. In view of the fact that the costs involved are shared equally by federal and provincial governments, implementation of the higher maximum payments and income ceilings will, of course, require parallel action on the part of the provinces. It is our hope that the provincial governments will see fit to cooperate in this matter to the end that recipients of disability allowances throughout Canada may benefit fully from this latest federal initiative.

As for the financial implications of this resolution it will, of course, involve a substantial increase in federal outlays. In March, 1961 some 50,600 individuals were in receipt of disability allowances at an annual cost to the federal treasury of approximately \$16,400,000. The total added outlays resulting from the changes now proposed are estimated at \$6,600,000 a year, of which the federal share would be one half or \$3,300,000.

[Mr. Starr.]

**Mr. Pearson:** Mr. Chairman, I do not propose to say very much about this resolution. It is the third or, I suppose, the fourth social security measure that has been introduced. It is a part of the package deal we have received which embodies, if I may put it this way, the quadrennial conscience and the electoral hope of the government.

We have supported these resolutions while complaining about their inadequacy in certain respects and the principles on which they are based in others. We will support this increase in disability allowances, a matter which, as with blindness allowances, appeals to the sympathy of all members of the house.

This increase is based on legislation introduced and passed in the house in June, 1954. It is interesting to note that when second reading of the bill was introduced at that time by my hon. friend from Essex East, who has done so much for social security progress in this country, he had this to say about the background of the legislation which is the basis for the changes that are being recommended today. I would point out that the legislation was introduced shortly after the election of 1953 and not before the election. Speaking on that occasion in moving second reading the hon. member, who was then minister of national health and welfare, said, as found on page 5329 of *Hansard* for June 1, 1954:

—I would emphasize again that this present legislation is based not on my authorship but on the example of others. I must say the real idea belongs to the Prime Minister. He made this offer... within a week of the holding of the last election. I mention that to indicate that I hope no one will say this represents an attempt to justify political promises made, because there were none made.

Then he added:

This represents a sincere attempt, in co-operation with the provinces, to supply another important development in what we hope is a responsible system of social security in this country.

That was the background, the genesis, of the legislation. Today we are asked to increase the disability grants made under that legislation, and in that way this proposal adds to the social security structure of our country. There has been a good deal of discussion about the effect of social security measures on our economy and progress and the position that Canada has achieved with regard to social security. A great deal was heard yesterday about international labour office reports which indicated or did not indicate the place that Canada held in the world in regard to the proportion of her national income devoted to social security measures. The fact is that social security legislative provisions can be a spur rather than a brake to our economy as well as representing social