

person receives \$182 and a couple receive \$243. In Nova Scotia, it is \$226 for a single person and \$356 for a couple.

● (1720)

Mr. Marshall: What was the figure for a single person in Newfoundland?

Mr. Douglas (Bruce-Grey): It is \$250, under a means test. In New Brunswick, a single person receives \$316 and a couple receive \$456. In Quebec, the figure is \$217 for a single person and \$347 for a couple. In Ontario it is \$250 for a single person and \$458 for a couple. In Saskatchewan it is \$235 and \$340. In Alberta it is \$241 and \$266, and in British Columbia it is \$215 and \$430. The problem that could arise is that if the hon. member's suggestion were accepted, it could be to the detriment of those who do not qualify under the means test but qualify only under the proposal put forward by the hon. member. On examining this problem, the government is concerned primarily with measures which would benefit all the needy, not just those afflicted with blindness, which is, of course, a very serious affliction indeed.

There are two other programs which I should like to mention which serve to improve conditions for the blind. Those are the vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons program and the national welfare grants. The vocational rehabilitation program has been in operation since 1952, first under the authority of an order in council, and since 1966 under the authority of the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act. The legislation was originally administered by the Department of Labour and subsequently by the Department of Manpower and Immigration. However, since 1953 responsibility for administering the program was transferred to the Department of National Health and Welfare.

Under agreements concluded with all the provinces and territories except Quebec the federal government contributes 50 per cent of the costs incurred by the province in providing a comprehensive program for the vocational rehabilitation of physically and mentally disabled persons. This program includes such services as medical, social and vocational assessment, counselling, restoration services, provision of prosthetics, training, maintenance allowances and the provision of tools, books and other equipment. These services are provided directly by the provincial government or purchased from voluntary agencies.

Shareable costs also include the salary and necessary travelling costs of the staff whose duties are directly related to the vocational rehabilitation program and other administrative expenses necessary for the co-ordination of delivery of services to the disabled. It provides 50 per cent of the costs incurred in the vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons. The federal government also provides consultation and advisory services to the provinces, develops standards and undertakes research. During the fiscal year 1975-76, over 50,000 handicapped persons received services across Canada and these were shared under the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act. The federal contribution that year was \$16.5 million.

Blindness Allowance

It can readily be seen that the federal government is actively engaged in assisting not only the blind but any disabled persons who need service, and through this effort creates equality of opportunity for the handicapped so that they can move from a condition of dependence to a state of greater self-reliance. Basically, this is what we are talking about, and certainly what the hon. member for Selkirk is talking about; namely, the ability of a disabled person—in this case, a blind person—to become self-reliant.

For a child who has grown up with the affection, love and care of parents, which is usually heaped upon these disabled youngsters, it must be a traumatic experience to reach an age at which parents can no longer be with him or her because of disability, health reasons or death. It must be traumatic for such a young man or woman to be thrust into society and have to cope with the day-to-day occurrences from which they had previously been shielded by their parents.

We must consider also providing the handicapped, whether they are blind, paraplegics or mentally incapacitated, with the type of services of which they themselves can take advantage. In urban transit we must provide better accessibility for those in wheelchairs to get to buses and subways so as to better integrate them into the travelling community. We must also provide assistance for the blind to enable them to make better use of public transport and communications systems. I believe that this is where money should be spent, rather than handing money to these people. We should update the services which the federal, provincial and municipal governments provide for the handicapped, not just for the blind but for all the handicapped, through the wide spectrum of these cases which will be put in the public domain.

We should certainly consider welfare grants when we look at the over-all costs in the proposal put forward by the hon. member for Selkirk. The welfare grants directorate provides annual sustaining grants to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and l'Association canadienne-française des aveugles. Sustaining grants are provided to enable these organizations to continue to focus on planning and co-ordination of services to blind Canadians. In 1976-77 the sustaining grant provided to CNIB was \$83,000, while that to l'Association canadienne-française des aveugles was \$13,000.

In addition, project funding may be provided for project activities such as specific planning projects, formulation of change in response to a current crisis or a current social problem, studies and consultations, especially of a goal-oriented nature, and inter- and intra-agency co-ordination. In 1976-77 project grants have totalled approximately \$30,000.

On April 18, 1973, the Minister of National Health and Welfare presented a working paper on social security in Canada as the government of Canada's contribution to the launching of the joint federal-provincial review of Canada's social security system. The working paper on social security admits—and I think I and anyone else would agree—that in Canada today there are many deficiencies in our social security system. The working paper has identified seven of them. Needy and blind persons in Canada suffer particularly from