

Social Security Policy

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I want to give my strong and unqualified support to the motion presented this afternoon by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale). One of the ways to make one's support effective in private members' hour, of course, is not to take too long, and I will try to abide by that principle. I should like to join with the hon. member in welcoming to the gallery today the members of the delegation which is with us, and to join with him in commending them and their various organizations on the tremendous work they do in the field of rehabilitation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Since the hon. member for Brandon-Souris and I have managed to break the rule about referring to people in the gallery without, thus far being chided by Your Honour, may I go just one step further and say to the hon. member for Brandon-Souris that I personally am delighted to see his son in the gallery today as well.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): If I may say so, it was my honour and privilege a couple of years ago, in another capacity, to confer upon Mr. Gunnar Dinsdale the degree of Bachelor of Arts at Brandon University, and all of us who know this young man know what an achievement it was for him to reach that status.

Mr. Speaker, the motion of the hon. member is well put. It does seem to cover everything. I think there is only one word missing, but it is probably covered by implication. In the main, the hon. member has done well to point out that such things as income maintenance at an adequate level must be achieved if we are going to help the disabled, the handicapped and the severely ill, but there are many other things we must do. In the main we must co-ordinate the services and the assistance which will enable such people to get out of static conditions in institutions and to live a normal life, or as normal as possible, in the family and in the community, if I may use the words of the hon. member's motion. The only word I do not see in the motion is "transportation", which may be covered by certain other phrases. It strikes me that transportation needs to be organized for the handicapped so that they can get to their places of education, employment, and so on.

● (1730)

All told, and I shall stand by my commitment to be brief, I think the hon. members' motion is excellent. We know how difficult it is to get any motion through in the time allotted for private members' hour. I hope, if it does not get through, that at least positive consideration will be given to the suggested establishment of a joint committee which can work on this matter and push it forward.

I thank the hon. member for his kind reference to my former colleague, Mrs. Grace MacInnis. I am sorry she is not here to speak in the debate on this important motion. We miss her in this House. She, by the way, is on a cruise in the South Pacific. I thought hon. members would be glad to know this. On her behalf and on behalf of the New Democratic Party, I register my strong support for this excellent motion.

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

Mr. Gus MacFarlane (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I should like to join in thanking the members of the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled for the wonderful work they are doing. I wish to assure them that we are all appreciative of their work and are certainly attentive to their recommendations.

The motion proposed by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) asks the government to give urgent consideration to the rehabilitation of disabled persons by means of providing the necessary income and services to enable them to integrate into Canadian society. While I support the hon. member's intention, I hope we will not slow down the work of the committees. I have faith in the ability of our federal and provincial governments to act on this matter and to implement suggestions of the kind the hon. member has brought forward. Perhaps we can make recommendations, but we should not do anything to slow down the progress of committees.

Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to quote part of the speech of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) to the conference of federal and provincial ministers of welfare in February, 1975. He said:

—a concerted effort should be made by federal and provincial officials alike to persuade employers to adapt their employment practices and work arrangements so as to make possible the part-time employment of single parents who are unable to work full-time outside of the home, and the employment of handicapped people who are unable to adapt themselves to normal work arrangements. Efforts of this kind have already been begun in several provinces but they need to be expanded and generalized. The community employment strategy proposed in the working paper on social security, and administered by the Department of Manpower and Immigration, was created for this purpose.

Rehabilitation and training programs must be expanded so as to ready for employment people who are handicapped in terms of personal capabilities or of their training and experience. The Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act and the Canada Assistance Plan provide federal assistance to this end, in so far as my ministry is concerned, but proposals for their expansion and integration will be advanced before the completion of the social security review this summer.

It gives me great pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to speak on this motion today because I feel the federal government can take real pride in its accomplishments so far in this area. After the First World War it became interested in disability because of returning war veterans. Many Canadians tend to forget our Canadian war heroes. We tend to forget the two boys who grew up in Almonte, Ontario, in that little one-roomed school. I am talking of Tait MacKenzie, the sculptor, who is responsible for many of our great pieces of athletic sculpture, and of James A. Naismith who invented the game of basketball. Those two boys skipped a stone off an old rock, as the story goes. One of them eventually went to McGill. Tait MacKenzie, after leaving McGill and having left James A. Naismith in charge, so to speak, sent him to Springfield. He went to the University of Pennsylvania and became a medical doctor. He was instrumental in developing, at the instruction of the president, rehabilitative devices for the American armed forces.

We in Canada did the same thing after the war. Before this some voluntary organizations had taken an interest in the disabled. Since that time we have demonstrated a continued interest in the needs not only of the military disabled but also of the civilian disabled. The national health grants program was instrumental in permitting the establishment of rehabilitation programs, the purchase of