

Social Security

The facts are so evident to everyone that I am sure there will not be any difficulty whatever in obtaining support of all hon. members in the house. If from time to time, under conditions of great necessity, we can find hundreds of millions, even billions of dollars, for the defence of our country, surely we can find lesser sums for the defence of our homes, the comfort of our people and the relief of those who suffer the disabilities visualized in the resolution.

Without prolonging the debate—because I suspect a number of members will want to speak in support of the resolution—I would say on behalf of my colleagues and myself that we welcome the introduction of this motion and will give it all the support of which we are capable.

Mr. Charles Cannon (Iles-de-la-Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, already on two or three occasions I have expressed my views in connection with this matter. Therefore I shall not speak at length, but will say at once that, like hon. members who have preceded me, I support the resolution before the house.

I know this is a problem that confronts all hon. members from every county. In all parts of Canada we find invalids who are not able to provide for themselves. We all receive letters requesting that we intercede in their behalf, and obtain some relief for them. Unfortunately we are obliged to reply that at present there is no federal legislation permitting such help.

In the Magdalen islands we have our quota of invalids—perhaps even more than are found in some other constituencies, because the great majority of my electors are fishermen whose work of wresting their livelihood from the sea is most difficult. Men age quickly, with the result that many of them are unable to earn their living long before they reach the age of seventy, at which time they would be eligible for old age pensions, or even sixty-five, at which age the old age pensions will begin if the recommendations of the committee that examined the matter at the last session are implemented.

On other occasions I have made the comparison which was made this afternoon by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart (Mr. Coldwell), who referred to the blind. Exactly the same principle applies to injured or crippled people as applies to the blind. The blind are unable to earn their own living, and invalids who are also unable to earn their living should be treated in the same way.

I would ask hon. members to give sympathetic consideration to the resolution, and to vote in favour of it.

Mr. Solon E. Low (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I wish to take only two or three minutes to express on behalf of the group I represent our pleasure that this resolution is now brought before the house. We believe it should be given the most sympathetic consideration of all hon. members and that it should be passed as an expression of the attitude of the house toward giving help to those who are physically incapacitated.

I do not believe this question and its ramifications was ever brought to our attention with greater force than when the Association of Incurables sent their representatives here not so long ago. I believe they waited upon the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin). I know they visited me and other members of this group, and presented their case. Surely those people are to be pitied, and I believe every member in the house must feel like trying to do something for them.

I know that in practically every session since I became a member this group has had something to say by way of requesting that the incurables and physically incapacitated be placed in a position similar to that of old age pensioners. There are thousands of homes across this country in which there are persons who are not employable, persons who by reason of physical disabilities have not been able to earn their own living. Parents, brothers and sisters have not been able to look after them properly.

When the representatives of the Association of Incurables came to Ottawa they told me that there were many of their members who could work and who were constantly seeking employment. But even when they were taken on to do jobs they were capable of doing, the public would not accept them in positions where members of the public were passing to and fro. For example, I was told of one worthy individual who had obtained a job as elevator operator in a large building. He was doing well at his job, until someone complained to the manager about having an incurable person operating the elevator. It is a tragedy when the public will not permit such a man to work and earn his living. I think we ought to do something about it.

When this question was up before I asked the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) if he would have his department conduct a survey to find out how many incurables there are in Canada.

Mr. Martin: That survey is under way now.

Mr. Low: That is fine. When we know that, we shall be able to determine the magnitude of the problem. I suggest that