

*Disabled Persons Act*

doubt principle were applied, it might be helpful in the interpretation of these regulations.

In conclusion, I may say that I hope the minister will give consideration to recommending these changes just as quickly as possible. One further matter I should like to mention is this question of the blind pension. It has been suggested over the years that the blind persons' allowance be paid to these persons regardless of income; that there be no income qualification. I suppose the principle here is that if a person is deprived of his sight he is deprived of one of the most valuable assets in making a living, and that compensation should be paid regardless of income because, regardless of what income he may have it is presumed he would be able to make more if he had his sight. This argument would apply to those who are receiving the disabled persons' allowance. They are, likewise, deprived of their ability to make a living, in whole or in part, and therefore should receive some basic compensation from society. I feel this is a point that is worthy of consideration. I believe this principle should be given consideration to a greater extent than it is at the present time in considering employability or income producing ability. This should be taken into consideration in assessing the amount that should be received by those who receive the disabled persons' allowance.

**Mr. Stanley Haidasz (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs):** I should like to congratulate the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Smith) for bringing to the attention of this house the sorry plight of many people in this country who are not just sick but totally and permanently disabled. It is true that the people in this category are unable to work. However, some attention should be given to the fact that by seeking to enlarge the Disabled Persons Act and the regulations, as a result of this motion, I believe the hon. member is confusing the whole issue.

The hon. member's motion, Mr. Speaker, would upset the basic principle of the Disabled Persons Act by introducing the concept of employability. Such a step would make the disabled persons allowance superfluous, and impossible to distinguish from the Unemployment Assistance Act which is now a part of the social legislation, federally and provincially, because it is a partnership.

So far as enlarging the definition of a disabled person is concerned I fail at the

moment to understand how the present definition can be enlarged further. This definition can be found under the Disabled Persons Act, office consolidation, 1961, and it states:

For the purposes of the act and these regulations, a person shall be deemed to be totally and permanently disabled when suffering from a major physiological, anatomical or psychological impairment verified by objective medical findings which is likely to continue indefinitely without substantial improvement and, as a result thereof, such person is severely limited in activities pertaining to normal living.

In my own experience as a medical practitioner I cannot agree with the statements that were made in this house concerning the applications for Ontario, because in my private experience I notice that more and more patients for whom I have filled out the medical reports for disability pensions are being accepted by the Ontario medical advisory board. However I must say a complete evaluation of the patient's status physically is not the entire solution in this matter, because a social report is also required by the regulations.

This social report is designed to provide the medical review board of each province with a clear picture of the applicant in his normal circumstances. It provides evidence of the degree of actual handicap which the impairment involves, and also indicates the extent to which the applicant has overcome difficulties in the past. It helps to identify those persons who would be capable of helping themselves if they received special assistance.

The intention of the act is not to make sick people permanently and totally disabled. In Canada we have progressively been making laws, and through government funds helping to increase the rehabilitation services. In this field of disabled persons I think that is where much emphasis and effort should be put in the future, that is, trying to make these people not only comfortable but placing them in the position to be active, even active to such a point as to earn a living. Nobody wants to be called a cripple and a useless person.

I would also like to draw to the attention of the house the vocational rehabilitation act which was passed by this parliament. This act also helps to assist in returning disabled persons to gainful employment. Furthermore, international meetings are convened from time to time to study social security problems, including the particular problem to which we are addressing our attention at the moment.

I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members that the International Social