

Social Security Policy

tation. The members of the committee are outstanding people in the field, such as Dr. Frank Murdoch from British Columbia, Dr. Veronique Susset from Sherbrooke, Quebec, Dr. Doris MacKay from British Columbia, and Dr. David Symington who is the professor and head of the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine at Queen's University. This group, which has now been operating for over a year, has been compiling information that has become available to the government and to the Department of National Health and Welfare.

With respect to the objective of the technical aids committee, we have in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon some of the most active people in the field of rehabilitation. I will not name them personally; I tried to do that when I initiated this topic back in 1973, but on such occasions one tends to miss some names. However, I will say that they are representative of such groups as the Canadian Paraplegic Association which has always provided outstanding leadership.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dinsdale: They also represent the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled, and other representative groups from across the country.

Last August, in the city of Vancouver, under the aegis of the Kinsmen Rehabilitation Foundation, the first international conference on technical aids for the handicapped took place. This was a major milestone in Canada's involvement in this increasingly important field of endeavour on behalf of the handicapped. As a result of that conference, a publication is now available which will be in the hands of the government and, I think, will provide all the necessary guidelines to come to immediate grips with the problems of implementing as quickly as possible, in terms of the resolution that we are debating today, a program of electronic and environment controls that is geared to meet the needs of the severely disabled and the chronically ill. It is the feeling of the committee that once we have a program of such controls for the severely disabled, there will be a positive approach to the care, treatment and rehabilitation of the severely handicapped, and I quote now from the last part of the motion—

● (1720)

—that will enable large numbers to be released from static expensive institutional care to a creative life in the family and community.

I want to pay tribute this afternoon to the leadership which has been provided by the Kinsmen Rehabilitation Foundation in the province of British Columbia. That foundation is one of the affiliated agencies of the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled, and it is largely because of the leadership they have provided in implementing the program in the province of British Columbia that we have been able to move forward in the technical aids committee to the point where we are now able to make specific recommendations to the Government of Canada.

I know that mentioning names is always risky, but I think it should be placed on the record that people like Mr. Ed Sherwood of the Kinsmen Rehabilitation Foundation, who was with us in the gallery today, has provided leader-

ship. As this is Women's International Year, we should not forget to mention that Miss Margret Perry has been very active in this program as well. She is an occupational therapist who has considerable experience in implementing technical aids programs for the physically handicapped of Canada.

I want other hon. members to participate in this debate this afternoon, but I want to wind up with three major points to bring the whole argument into focus. First, there has been renewed leadership on the part of the physically handicapped themselves, and the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled has brought together a conference of the handicapped to deal with the problems of meeting their own specific needs. The first conference took place in the city of Toronto a little over a year ago. I must give credit where credit is due: it was funded by the Department of National Health and Welfare.

Out of that initial conference has come a continuing committee of the physically disabled which is continuing to explore the areas I have outlined in my resolution, that is, transportation facilities, housing facilities, educational facilities, technical aids, income maintenance and general co-ordination of all these problems.

I should point out, too, that there have been specific policy recommendations in this area both from the opposition party and, as I have already indicated, from the minister representing the government side of the House. Again we have reached the important stage of development where, instead of the non-handicapped sitting in conference and committee to recommend solutions for the handicapped, the handicapped themselves have taken control of their own destiny and have come up with some excellent recommendations which have been given to the government for its consideration.

All this, of course, requires funding. Up to the present moment, in meeting the needs of these various activities to which I have referred funding has been on an ad hoc basis. Whenever a request has been made to the officials of the government of Canada who are concerned with the area of rehabilitation, there has been a positive response. But I am sure the minister, or whoever is speaking for the minister this afternoon, will agree that the time has come when there has to be a specific program and a policy which moves beyond the ad hoc approach, and what I have tried to do this afternoon is to point out that there has been considerable input into this subject since this debate last took place in 1973.

I hope the government will respond in a positive way to the recommendations of the CRCDC, which has put forward positive budget recommendations which, if accepted by the government, will make it possible to expand the excellent program already under way which I have outlined briefly this afternoon. But fundamentally and primarily, I hope that as other hon. members take part in this debate this afternoon we will obtain support from all sides of the House for the setting up of a committee, preferably a joint committee, which will be authorized to deal in depth with the subject of rehabilitation. There are any number of agencies in the field. What is needed now is policy co-ordination. I hope this recommendation will be accepted and that it will be one of the positive outcomes of our discussion this afternoon.