

our strong appeals was that Canada was on the verge of making a breakthrough at the government level in programs and legislation for the handicapped. Of course this was not so; the social services legislation has gone down the drain and has been dropped completely.

We had also hoped to have a report from the Special Committee on the Handicapped which was set up last November. That, unfortunately, was delayed by the election, with which we are all quite familiar. As well, we had hoped that the organization committee for the handicapped which will be responsible for organizing the Canadian program for the Year of the Disabled in 1981 would be in place. Indeed, it is now in place—I think the announcement was made today—but this is after the fact.

Perhaps to pinpoint our delinquency in this regard, Mr. Speaker, I should point out that the House of Commons, Parliament Hill, is still not accessible to the handicapped even though we unanimously supported a certain motion a few months ago. If I may make the reference directly to Your Honour, we have, for example, been fighting for the designation of one single lone parking space on Parliament Hill allowing a severely handicapped person to park a car and have immediate access to the House of Commons. This is why I say governments are lagging behind.

● (2215)

But the attitudinal barriers are even greater than the problems of architectural accessibility. Someone has said that a change in law will never be able to rectify the shattering degradation that far too many physically disabled persons suffer. This is why I have been advocating since this new Parliament met that we should proceed immediately to introduce amendments to the Human Rights Act which would provide total protection against discrimination toward our disabled and handicapped citizens. I asked the minister on May 21 if she would proceed immediately to introduce this legislation as an act of good faith. Unfortunately, she replied, as reported in *Hansard* for that day:

I am aware, as I said, that the hon. member is particularly eager to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to protect all handicapped from discrimination. That is a matter which we have looked into ourselves in all the departments concerned and which, in turn, the committee will surely want to look into.

The point I wish to make is that we have looked into it. It is not necessary to look into it again, and the committee should not really have it as one of its points of reference because Canada's human rights commissioner himself, in a letter to me on October 29, said in reference to this matter, and I quote from the last paragraph of that letter:

We have evidence of very strong public support for ameliorating discriminatory practices against those who have a physical disability.

Then he added this significant phrase:

I think the time has come.

The former minister of justice, Senator Jacques Flynn, handed on the responsibility to the law officers of the Crown to prepare the drafting of legislation. I understand that this legislation is all ready to be presented to the House of Com-

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mons. I hope that in the government's response tonight it will tell us that it is going to bring in the legislation. Everyone wants the legislation. It is drafted, and we certainly want it to be in position before The Year of the Disabled, 1981. If we wait for the report of the committee—the committee now is not going to be able to report until the end of December—it will not be in place for the commencement for The Year of the Disabled.

There are two House leaders here tonight, the House leader for the official opposition and for the New Democratic Party. I am sure I could get their nods if I put the proposal that if the legislation were introduced it would get speedy passage. Let us proceed immediately.

Mr. Gilbert Parent (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to respond to my good friend, the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale). In his question he requested the assurance of the Government of Canada that it will proceed with amendments to the Human Rights Act in order to provide full protection for the disabled against discrimination. However, with respect, I point out that this is probably a question of a legal nature, and as such perhaps it should have been directed to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien).

I am certain that the hon. member is well aware that it was impossible to complete legislative changes of such importance by the time of the Fourteenth World Congress of Rehabilitation International, which he mentioned a little earlier and which was held in Winnipeg during the last week in June.

This is not to suggest that the Government of Canada is not active at the present time in ensuring the rights of disabled people in this country. As I previously informed the House, the government has established, as the hon. member said, an organizing committee for the International Year of the Disabled, which will be in 1981, as well as a parliamentary task force on the disabled and handicapped.

Mr. Dinsdale: You are way behind.

Mr. Parent: Unfortunately, discrimination against disabled persons is still too common in the workplace because of environmental barriers, administrative technicalities or, quite frankly and unfortunately, attitudes toward the disabled.

I believe the hon. member said that this chamber and the buildings here on the Hill are not accessible to disabled persons. I point out with respect that I know for a fact that at the Confederation Building there are facilities for the disabled. There is a ramp at the back in order to get in. There are ramps at the South Block and the West Block, and I was told a little earlier by my colleague, the hon. member for Kent-Essex (Mr. Daudlin) that there also is access through the doors at the rear of this building so that the disabled can get in.

Mr. Dinsdale: The freight entrance.

Mr. Parent: If the hon. member refers to the galleries here, yes, we do not have facilities there.

Mr. Dinsdale: There is no place to park.