

Social Security

listened to them carefully, and was sympathetic. But a year has passed since then and nothing has been done. Sympathy is not going to get them anywhere. We must do more than that. Canada is not such a hard-up country, financially or otherwise, that we could not begin to do a little bit. I should like to see the minister come forward with some sort of plan during this session, even though it be not very great. It will be a start in the right direction. I hope something will be done.

(Translation):

Mr. Raoul Poulin (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, with my colleagues' permission, I shall say only a few words in support of the motion put forward by the hon. member for Terrebonne (Mr. Bertrand).

I well understand that this is an extremely involved matter. I have no wish of complicating it further by a long speech. Nevertheless there are certain aspects of the question which are quite simple, as all here will readily agree. We do have in our midst disabled people, incurables, from the mental or physical points of view, who are worthy of our attention.

One of the aspects of this matter is that very often the permanently disabled are unhappy not so much because of their physical disability, but because of a feeling of inferiority, as well as the anguish and anxiety they feel about their future. If these incurables could feel that the government of their country and their representatives dealt appropriately with their case, it is certain that their disabilities would seem less of a burden and that they could put up with their condition.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) told us a while ago that a survey was already under way to determine how many people are permanently disabled in this country. The hon. minister and the house may be surprised at the very large number of these incurables. Naturally, this condition would involve quite a financial problem. Fortunately, it is not my problem but that of the government.

However, I want to point out another aspect of the matter which the hon. member for Portneuf (Mr. Gauthier) mentioned a moment ago. It is a fact that if they are granted an allowance many disabled would be in a position to improve their condition and perhaps to be made well again.

There are undoubtedly a great many families without sufficient means to give medical attention to their members suffering from a

[Mr. Johnston.]

chronic disease. With proper care, a great number of these sick people could be restored to health. Naturally one cannot blame our large families for not giving their disabled members all the care their condition would require.

I have nothing more to add. May I say, however, that I quite understand the government's reluctance. I realize it takes time to settle a matter like this. Apart from any political motive, even if it has been said, a few moments ago, that this measure was a measure of the Liberal party, I believe all parties will admit there is something to be done in this field.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare will surely consider this highly important problem. I hope that in the not too distant future he will find a way to help our incurables.

(Text):

Mr. J. A. Blanchette (Compton-Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, I need not tell you that I am heartily in accord with the mover of this resolution as well as in accord with hon. members who have expressed themselves on this matter this afternoon. As the hon. member for Temiscouata (Mr. Pouliot) has said, it is true that some few years back, after the hon. member for Terrebonne (Mr. Bertrand) had introduced this resolution, I myself in the following year introduced a resolution along the same lines. My explanation for it is that I did not know the tenacity of the hon. member for Terrebonne as well then as I do now. Knowing how tenacious he has been since then I have supported him in each succeeding year since he first introduced the resolution in 1946.

I feel, Mr. Speaker, you will agree with me that the discussions this afternoon have been most interesting, most beneficial and most comforting, especially to the invalids and to those who are incurable. Perhaps it will give them a certain hope, because some of them have felt that they have been forgotten in the social legislation.

It is true, as we all know, that certain assistance has been given to needy mothers by way of family allowances to children, and also pensions have been given to the aged and to the blind. It seems to me that we should go a step farther in our social legislation and do all that we can to hasten assistance to the invalids and to the incurables.

I have had the privilege of being mayor of a municipality and warden of my county in the province of Quebec for the past twelve or fifteen years. It is true that in that province we have the public assistance act, but this act does not seem to be operative when