

The Address—Mr. Knowles

without the interference of government agencies. When people to my left get up and say that everything must be under government auspices I would refer them to the credit union movement as a glowing example of what people in Canada can do on their own without government assistance or interference.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand a copy of a recent issue of a daily newspaper published not far from here which contains what I regard as a very delightful human interest story. This was written by one of the members of the press gallery, Mr. Gerald Waring, who writes a column under the caption "Capital Comment". This is a story of how we finally got pensions for disabled persons. It is not my purpose at this point to rehash the debate we had on that question last session, but if hon. members have not had this article by Gerald Waring drawn to their attention I believe they will be interested in hearing its details.

According to this columnist there is a young woman about twenty-two years of age, whose name we do not yet know, who lives in Sherbrooke, Quebec, to whom considerable credit should be given. It appears that in July, 1953—when most of us were extremely busy, as hon. members will recall if they think back to that time—the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) was in the midst of his election campaign. He visited Sherbrooke and spoke there at what I am sure was a large and enthusiastic meeting. The parents of this young woman to whom I have referred attended the meeting and, according to Mr. Gerald Waring, in order to break the monotony of their daughter's day—for she is tied to a wheelchair, being disabled with a spinal ailment—they took her to the meeting; and he says, if I may quote him in part:

She was intensely interested in what the great French-Canadian leader had to say.

Mr. Gerald Waring points out that the theme of the Prime Minister's speech had been the Liberals' record in the field of welfare legislation. As this young woman listened to the Prime Minister's glowing reports of what the Liberal party had done, she wondered why this government had not done something for people like her. According to the story as set out in this column, the idea stuck in her mind for several weeks, and shortly after the election on August 10 was over, she decided to do something about it, so she wrote a letter to the Prime Minister.

There is nothing unique about that procedure. Many people write letters to the Prime Minister, and many more would like to do so. Indeed, this columnist says there is no question but that many letters have

been written to the Prime Minister across the years asking that something be done in the direction of pensions for disabled persons. But most of those letters had been intercepted, apparently, by the Prime Minister's efficient secretarial staff, and in the past the routine was that those letters were sent over to the Department of National Health and Welfare where, for many years, the stock answer was sent out that, although the people at Ottawa were interested, this was really a provincial matter.

But this young woman whose name we do not know, instead of writing to the Prime Minister here at Ottawa—apparently she knew that he was having a little holiday after the strain of the election campaign—addressed her letter to him at his summer home at St. Patrick in the province of Quebec. It appears, therefore, that this young woman's letter, stating her plight and her view that, if the Liberal party believed in a program of human welfare, something should be done for disabled persons, came to the Prime Minister's personal attention.

As I go on and read the story I find that the Prime Minister was greatly impressed by this young woman's letter to him and accordingly, so Gerald Waring says, he wrote back to the young lady assuring her that the government would bring in disability allowances legislation at the next session of parliament. Then this columnist goes on to say that, on the Prime Minister's personal instructions, legislation was hastily prepared, presented to parliament and enacted.

As we also recall, when this legislation was before us last session the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) paid a tribute to the Prime Minister's personal interest in this question. The Minister of National Health and Welfare said that interest was indicated to him in a letter which the Prime Minister wrote to the Minister of National Health and Welfare shortly after the election of August 10, 1953.

Whether or not this story is apocryphal, I do not know. It certainly has the ring of validity about it. As I said in my opening remarks, I regard it as a delightful human interest story. This columnist to whom I have already referred says that he made strenuous efforts to ascertain the name of this young woman. He even went down to Sherbrooke and interviewed a number of people, but he has been unable to learn her name. In his column he expresses the hope that sooner or later the Prime Minister will dig out that letter and let us know the name. I agree with Gerald Waring. I think