

Statements by Ministers

responsibility for several months and I have, therefore, decided to be a little bit charitable. However, I will be less so to the Hon. Member for Eglinton-Lawrence (Mr. de Corneille) because I listened very carefully to the remarks which he just concluded. I must confess to becoming a bit agitated as I listened to them.

As I pointed out, I was a member of the special committee on the disabled which was formed by the last Government after the 1980 election. Our mandate was to draw up a report and make recommendations in preparation for the International Year of the Disabled. While it is true, Mr. Speaker, that that committee made 130 recommendations to the Government, it is not factual to say that the previous Government implemented two-thirds of those recommendations. In fact, I want to point out to the House that that committee on the disabled summoned many Ministers from the previous Government before it to give a report on what they had done and what progress they had made toward implementing the recommendations of the report.

To say the very least, Mr. Speaker, the previous Government did not go much farther than making the precincts of Parliament accessible to the disabled. The only other thing it did was to give assurances that either the Minister or the Minister's Department were examining the committee's recommendations with a view to implementing them. I would be very happy to receive evidence to the contrary, but in my experience the previous Government did even less than the present Government is doing, and it is not doing all that much. I want to make that clear. I cannot sit in the House and listen to the remarks of the Hon. Member for Eglinton-Lawrence and not say something about them because what he has told the House is flim-flam. The previous Government did not do what the Member suggested that it did and I regret that very much.

● (1620)

Mr. de Corneille: Were you on the committee that wrote the Obstacles Report?

Mr. Young: The Hon. Member asked me if I was on the committee. If he listened to my opening remarks he would have heard me say that I was not only a member of the special committee on the disabled and the handicapped, which wrote the Obstacles Report, I was a member of the committee that brought subsequent reports.

Mr. de Corneille: Did you sign your name to that?

Mr. Young: Of course, I signed my name to that. I think the Hon. Member for Eglinton-Lawrence should get straight in his mind which reports he is talking about. I am talking about the committee reports.

Mr. Kilgour: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Hon. Member for Eglinton-Lawrence (Mr. de Corneille) was not interrupted by the Hon. Member who is speaking now. The Member for Eglinton-Lawrence is heckling him and I think he

should listen to what the Member is saying. I would ask that the Chair insist upon that.

Mr. Young: Excellent suggestion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The Chair tries to be patient with all Members of the House and reminds everyone that heckling consumes time. Perhaps the Member for Beaches may choose not to answer questions put to him.

Mr. Young: I do not mind answering questions, Mr. Speaker, if they warrant a response. I would simply point out to the Hon. Member for Eglinton-Lawrence that the report he is referring to was not a report written by that special committee. It is a report written by the Liberal Government in response to the Obstacles Report. That special committee tore that response to shreds. We called witnesses before the committee. They were people who were disabled consumers. We asked them for their response to the Government's response to our report. In nearly every instance, the response we received from organizations like the Canadian Council of the Deaf, COPOH and a host of other disabled consumer organizations was that the Government did not do what it said it did.

The Government gave a response that was based more on a public relations exercise than in responding in real terms to the recommendations in that report. That is all I want to say on that subject because when we enter into debate in this House we should be concerned with facts, not on what someone would like to believe happened.

Let me deal with the Minister's statement. As I pointed out, the Minister is relatively new in that portfolio and I want to be charitable. I will say that at least the Minister made a report to the House, which previous Ministers have not done. I appreciate that response, rather than those we received from the previous Government. I appreciate the Minister giving us the opportunity to speak in the House on a matter of grave concern to a large percentage of the Canadian population who are disabled or handicapped. Ten per cent may be considered a rather conservative number but at least 10 per cent of the Canadian population are considered to be disabled or handicapped.

Transportation is very much a key to allowing disabled Canadians to participate fully in the mainstream of Canadian life. Employment is the number one key to making a disabled person a fully functional and integrated member of Canadian society but there is not much sense talking about creating jobs for disabled individuals unless we can provide the means for getting those people from their home to their workplace and back again. I am afraid that the Minister's proposals will not achieve that goal.

Unfortunately, today the Minister only gave more suggestions for study, apart from a couple of areas. I commend the Minister for setting up the pilot project in Newfoundland. That was a key demand from COPOH during the election campaign. The Government promised to do something about it and I am glad it has acted.