

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, in the cold, crass economic terms with which we have to deal so many times in our society, that if these people were not good, responsible people in our society, they could easily avoid their responsibilities as parents, or spouses in some cases, and shunt these handicapped people off to state institutions and ask the state to carry those responsibilities. If one wants to look at it in crass, economic terms, it would cost the state something like \$15,000 a year to look after these people.

We have parents or spouses of handicapped people who want to maintain responsible and loving relationships with their family, but the officials of the income tax department are trying to define the provision so narrowly that as few people as possible will qualify for the benefits of this deduction rather than as many as possible. Sir, I object to that, and I know that members of this government object to that. Therefore, we want to see the wording of that bulletin changed so that we can have, perhaps through the simple mechanism of a doctor's certificate, a declaration that a particular individual needs constant care. We could have that bulletin changed from the present wording that is so restrictive to read as stated in my request, as follows:

—(a) that a deduction of \$1,000 annually, adjusted to an indexed cost of living clause, may be claimed from taxable income by an individual who is so sufficiently disabled that he cannot attend to his own personal needs or whose mobility is considerably restricted, throughout any twelve-month period ending in the year;—

I have checked with many organizations across Canada already. We have been in touch with them and they are in agreement with this proposal. I am talking about organizations dealing with help for the handicapped. I know they are in agreement and that they have had their legal experts examine this particular matter. I suggest that if the House has any compassion at all, if its perspective is in any way geared to helping the relatives of handicapped people as much as possible rather than as little as possible, we should do everything in our power to make sure this motion will be carried.

Mrs. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member across the floor on his sentiments, his motivations and particularly his concern for parents of handicapped parents. I am sure we share his concern. However, in regard to this particular motion, if he takes another look at it I am sure he will realize it does not go nearly far enough. I would like to bring to his attention several points that are discriminatory. In particular, the very terminology of the motion refers only to handicapped people as "he". Since I have been a new member in this House many times we have found that females seem to be excluded. In my opinion, this is not good enough. We must be far more conscious of including "he's" and "she's" when we provide for such measures.

Second, I would like to know a little more about the present income tax deductions. It is my understanding that people are now allowed \$1,600 maximum. I am wondering if this is an additional \$1,000? I would not object if it is because these people need more money. However, I understand from the definitions the hon. member referred to that he was

Disability Allowance

particularly concerned with parents. Perhaps that is something he can clarify for us.

• (1710)

My main concern is that most handicapped people will not benefit from this measure. It is like the mortgage tax credit proposal of the Conservative government: it benefits those who are able to work and those handicapped who earn above the minimum wage. That includes very few handicapped people. Of the working handicapped people, less than 30 per cent earn the minimum wage. Many work in workshops for the handicapped. I wish the hon. member would listen because what I am saying concerns his motion. Many earn less than the minimum wage. There is no way they pay income tax. They are the ones who need help, along with the unemployed.

What we should be talking about is a tax credit to help meet the needs of handicapped people and parents of handicapped children. We should also be looking at the needs of the handicapped who are over 65. This group is growing larger every day. We are told that over one-third of the handicapped people over the age of 65 have mobility handicaps. There are very few community facilities and transportation services for these people and their income is inadequate for them and their families who must care for them at home.

There are income tax inconsistencies the hon. member should check into for handicapped workers. I am told a worker can deduct the maintenance cost of a van with a hydraulic system to lift the wheelchair, but cannot deduct the capital cost of the hydraulic system and lift.

Our main point of concern should be the reason why more employable handicapped people are not employed. There are many who could work if more jobs were suited to them and more employers were willing to handle them, including the federal government. There should be more incentives and supports for the handicapped in order that they may get off social allowances, or the handicapped person's allowance as it is known in British Columbia. There should be more money for those who work. I should explain that if a handicapped person is able to find an employer who is willing to hire him, he not only loses his social allowance but also coverage for drugs and home care he may need. Such person is not entitled to transportation programs which are essential to get to work and around the community.

We have a situation where services for the handicapped have been cut back drastically, especially transportation services. It is absolutely essential for these people to be able to get out of their prisons, which is literally what many of them are in. In British Columbia alone, over 12,000 handicapped people under the age of 65 receive the handicapped person's allowance. Many have much potential to contribute to their employment and their community. We must look into some of the special considerations there. We should be planning urban transit now that will accommodate wheelchairs for these people. This is something to which the federal government should be contributing. Our buildings, including this one, should be more accessible to the handicapped.