

Vocational Rehabilitation

It has been my own fate to suffer a disability as a result of the war. I am thus in a position to state that on my return from the war, I took advantage of the rehabilitation services made available to me by the Department of Veterans Affairs and I was thus able, just as other war amputees of Canada, to adjust myself to a new kind of life. What was done in our case by the Department of Veterans Affairs, can be done for the civilians by the provincial governments.

I therefore commend this measure which will enable the federal government to cooperate with provincial governments with a view to helping those who, as a result of unfortunate circumstances beyond their control, now find themselves suffering from a physical handicap and perhaps are unable to play their part in today's world unless they are given assistance by the nation.

In closing my remarks, therefore, may I say that both for moral considerations and as a means of rehabilitating our disabled people, this program is essential, and I am sure it will be welcomed by every member of this house.

(Text):

Mr. Batten: I rise to lend my support to this resolution, to make a few remarks in regard to this and, particularly, to compare the different parts of the resolution with the agreements which the federal government already has with most of the provinces of Canada.

Looking over this resolution I have been interested in finding a definition of the term "vocational rehabilitation". The word "rehabilitation" would suggest the meaning of returning someone to a former status. I do not think this meaning can be applied altogether to the word in this particular context, because it could also mean restoring somebody to a useful status—a status which he did not have before. After looking for a good definition of the term "vocational rehabilitation" for some time, I finally succeeded in finding one in a recommendation which was made by the international labour conference held in Geneva on June 1, 1955. On page 1 of a pamphlet which I have here, the term is defined as:

That part of the continuous and co-ordinated process of rehabilitation which involves the provision of vocational services such as vocational guidance, vocational training and selective place-

[Mr. Sevigny.]

ment designed to enable a disabled person to secure and retain stable employment.

The resolution which is before us purports to carry out a number of different objects. Taken in turn, they are as follows:

To authorize the Minister of Labour to enter into agreement with the provinces to share the cost of vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons; to co-ordinate federal activities in this field; to undertake research in respect of vocational rehabilitation; to provide a national advisory council, and to provide remuneration for the chairman and to pay other necessary expenses of this council.

It is indeed interesting to compare what this resolution tries to do with what can now be done under agreements with the provinces. Most of us will remember that before 1951 Canada had no rehabilitation program as such. There were organizations, both private and governmental, which were interested in this work, and one can well remember the rehabilitation services of the Department of Veterans Affairs, for example.

But it was not until 1951 that all these organizations met at a conference to decide what could be done on a larger scale for the rehabilitation of disabled persons in Canada. The host of organizations represented at this conference recommended that there should be some program which would co-ordinate the various services on different levels throughout all parts of the country. The result was that in 1953 the government of the day announced the rehabilitation of disabled persons agreements. It is interesting to compare the description of the federal rehabilitation assistance, as given on page 62 of the report of the Department of Labour for the year ended March 3, 1960, with this legislation. In the description of the services which were inaugurated in 1953, we find that the things which were provided then are very similar to the things which are to be provided by the proposed legislation. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I would think there is very little new in this particular resolution. That, of course, is no reason why there should not be support for it. I do not think it would be proper for us to think that this resolution is doing something new and something which has not been done in Canada before.

In my own province of Newfoundland rehabilitation services present a very difficult problem not only in case finding and treatment, but also in training, retraining and placement. Many of our people live in small settlements scattered throughout more than 1,200 small communities along the coast.