

*Social Security Policy*

As it was not like the old office, he bumped into things. He sat down and told me his story. He did not want to be in employment where he could not give anything. He has had that for two years. He has a pension about which he could not care less. He had done his work at McMaster and wanted to know if there was something I could do for him. This boy wants to work at something useful. Although I tried to do as much as I could for this boy while at university, I had not realized I was not doing anything to make certain, when he finished, that he could do what he wanted to do. This is indeed a responsibility we must bear in mind. People with this kind of disability want to work as an expression of themselves, not just to do their work.

For many of the disabled, work gives meaning to their lives. A citizen has commented to me that work has a primary role to play in the way his family sees him, the breadwinner. He said, "A man or woman has to feel that he or she is still a man or woman even though disabled. Work also gives me the satisfaction of not being dependent. Work gives me self-satisfaction, self-respect and the pride essential to a human being." Another disabled person was not for work as much as he was against not working; he said, "I work because if I don't, I feel sick. I just don't feel the same. I never wake up all day; I'm in a sleepy mood because I'm not using my energy. I feel dopey."

As I have mentioned, the government has been active over the years in providing the disabled with the necessary training and services to permit them to become employable. This has always been the goal of the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act. VRDP permits the provinces to offer comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services which include medical, social and vocational assessment, counselling, restoration services, provision of prostheses, training, maintenance allowances, and the provision of tools, books and other equipment. These services can be provided directly by the province or they may be purchased from a voluntary agency.

The act recognizes the uniqueness of each disabled person's problem and allows for individuals to be provided with the services required on an individual basis. In addition, it permits the individual disabled person himself to be involved in the planning and processing of his own rehabilitation. He participates in setting rehabilitation goals for himself in employment and in the means by which he is to reach that goal. Services are available to a person on the basis of his disability and his need for services rather than the financial need of the individual and his family: there is no financial test under VRDP.

Service delivery is co-ordinated under a provincial co-ordinator and the program draws on the resources of all levels of government, the voluntary sector and the private sector; for example, training on the job in private industry. It is supplementary and complementary to existing social services and other related programs. The Department of National Health and Welfare has been pleased to be a part of an interdepartmental committee which is presently studying employment in the public service for persons with special needs. Demonstration projects will soon be set up in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and the national capital area with the dual aims of increasing the

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employment in the public service of persons with special needs, and of providing data on barriers to employment.

When we speak of employment of the handicapped it becomes necessary to speak of sheltered workshops, of which there is a wide variety. The Department of National Health and Welfare has been pleased to collaborate with the Canadian Council of Rehabilitation Workshops in formulating guidelines for the operation of workshops. The vocational needs of disabled persons are similar to those of other people. They, too, seek employment in the world of work at a level compatible with their abilities and potential. At one time or another, all of us have required some assistance in achieving employment and social participation. The disabled person, as is the case of the non-disabled, expects society to provide a reasonable level of assistance in helping him or her to prepare for and obtain suitable employment. When the limitations of the individual do not permit him or her to meet the demands of traditional work settings, alternative work opportunities appropriate to his or her level of capacity should be available.

Many vocationally disabled individuals are able to function effectively in normal employment situations. Others can only do so with the aid of specialized preliminary vocational services to the handicapped, ranging from intensive assessment to ongoing sheltered employment to activity programs where work is one of the several program components. It is important for us here to think of the person being rehabilitated. We should be very careful about getting involved in the sheltered program all the time because many of these people do not want a sheltered program; they want to work on their own and to be accepted into society. We should have programs which try to bring them into that situation.

We also have to think of institutional care. I wish to say here, in a few short words, that while it is important to have institutional care, there are some people who say some pretty strong things about it. A young man said in a letter that he felt he was continually surrounded by people who were going to leave him, people going to the great beyond, people who were going to die. He said he wants to be on his own where he can make his own way. It is terribly important that we should develop the independence of the individual and provide the funds for that individual to grow up in family surroundings, not necessarily in a confined, controlled area.

Another young man in a chronic care hospital said, "It's a lonely place. The main recreation is watching your room-mates die." We should not take those words lightly. These are sincere words; they are not of a person crying in the dark but of one who wants to get out and live and be part of the world, which is justly his or her right.

I have not touched on the mentally retarded; I have been talking largely on the physical. However, it is terribly important to think of these people. I had a wonderful opportunity last Saturday evening. I was invited to a dance in aid of a local initiatives program which I thought was fantastic. I am very proud because this was in my district. In Hamilton Mountain there are some people who work for the Royal Botanical Gardens. Sometimes these people have just been released from mental institutions. If they are given a task where there is not too much pressure