

Social Security

deal more virile than it is today. We must realize that as time goes on this condition of incurability is a great deal worse than it was twenty-five or thirty years ago. The hon. member has referred to the situation faced by the blind. We all know that in the larger cities, and even in the rural areas, as stated by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Low), it is sometimes possible to give employment to people in this category, but the public object to their being employed. This condition exists from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Regardless of our political beliefs I feel that we as a group in this house should give whole-hearted support to this resolution.

I am not prepared to say to the government at the present time, and I do not think anyone else in the house is, what the bill of goods may cost. I am very happy to note that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) has stated that the survey is now under way. Regardless of what the specific disease may be, where an incurable mark or scar has been left on an individual surely that is a condition the betterment of which should meet with the whole-hearted support of members of the House of Commons individually and collectively. Therefore I am more than happy to support the resolution and to learn that the government is now making a survey so that in the not too far distant future it may be able to come to the house and give us some idea of what this program may cost the taxpayers of Canada. I am sure the taxpayers will be glad to bear the burden.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I too wish to indicate my wholehearted support of the resolution now before the house. Like the others who have preceded me I want to congratulate the hon. member for Terrebonne (Mr. Bertrand) upon bringing forward this resolution, and I want to commend him in particular for his persistence in introducing it year in and year out. I hope the time has now been reached when the house will have an opportunity to record its opinion in favour of the resolution, and that government action will follow.

It is not my intention to take more than a few minutes, because this is a matter on which, from the speeches made thus far, apparently we are all agreed. I felt, however, that I should like to call to the attention of the house the fact that the special joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on old age security which met last year found itself face to face with this problem repeatedly, despite the fact that the committee recognized that its terms of reference did not permit it to discuss the problem. I note in particular that on page 101

of the report of that committee, which was tabled in this house on June 28, 1950, there is this sentence:

The committee has been deeply impressed by the evidence presented as to the position in which invalids and incurables find themselves at present.

I am sure that any members present who were members of the committee will agree with me that that is a very accurate statement of how members of that committee felt about the problem of incurables. I go on:

It has also received representations from organizations representing the blind, and blindness is, of course, part of the total problem of invalidity.

Then the committee had to say this:

The committee has felt, however, that the terms of reference established for it ruled out the possibility of a detailed examination of this problem as it applies to the younger age group.

I want to emphasize the fact that, although the committee realized that the problem of incurables was outside its terms of reference, the problem was so pressing that we kept coming back to it time and again. If I were to go through the mountain of evidence that we had before the committee I would be able to show that the question was referred to many times, both by delegations and by witnesses who appeared before the committee, and by members of the committee themselves. In the committee's final report, which is all I am referring to now, I find this further reference on page 103 under the heading "Other claims to priority". It reads:

Finally, in its study of the old age security systems in effect in other countries, and in its consideration of the evidence presented by representative Canadian organizations and individuals, the committee has had to keep constantly in mind the place of old age in an over-all social security program. While the terms of reference of the committee have limited its study to the specific field of old age security, it has not felt it advisable to overlook the fact that there are other areas of social need in which governments, both provincial and federal, may be called upon to take in the future a substantial measure of responsibility.

The committee went on to deal with these other matters that had to be looked at as well as old age, with which we were particularly concerned, including the problem of invalidity, and again I say, despite the fact that it was outside our terms of reference, the problem pressed itself upon us so deeply that the committee went to the extent of getting from officials of the Department of National Health and Welfare a figure as to what it might cost to provide pensions for invalids and incurables. That figure is contained in a paragraph on page 104 of the report. The reference is as follows:

So far as pensions for invalidity are concerned, an amount of the order of \$40 to \$50 million might be involved, depending on the details of the program and the nature of the eligibility test which might be applied.