



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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SOCIAL WELFARE AND SECURITY

Address by the Hon. Paul Martin, Minister
of National Health and Welfare, to the
Canadian Welfare Council, Niagara Falls,
Ontario, May 8th, 1947.

In speaking to you today on Social Welfare in Canada, I think it is essential to have a clear understanding of what is involved in such a program. Social Security needs are not necessarily the same in all countries, nor is the machinery for achieving social security always exactly the same. We have to recognize that in Canada we are working within the framework of a federal state. This means that in many respects the machinery for achieving social security must be established on a different basis from that which is possible in unitarian states like Great Britain and New Zealand.

We must also keep in mind for our Canadian requirements the fact that Canada has, during the past few decades, been moving from a rural to an increasingly urban and industrialized type of life. But this transition is not yet complete; consequently we are faced with the problem of devising a social security plan that will meet the needs of two-thirds of our Canadian community which is following an industrialized and urban way of life, without overlooking the entirely different pattern of requirements for that very important third of our population which continues to live on farms.

ELEMENTS OF AN ADEQUATE SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAM

Keeping in mind these factors, I would say that the first and probably the most important elements in the development of an adequate program of social security for Canadians on the farms and in the factories are those which centre around the concept of "economic maintenance" which is part, but by no means all, of the more comprehensive concept of "social" security.

The first step in the achievement of economic security is, of course, the provision of employment, at the highest possible national level. This involves two sets of considerations, - one which centres around the problem of the wage earner, and the other centering around the problem of the self-employed primary producer on the farm or in our fishing industries.

The Government has already made its position clear with respect to this particular aspect of the problem. It did so first in its White Paper, issued by the Minister of Reconstruction in the Spring of 1945. In keeping with the policies set forth in that document, the Government set before the provinces in August, 1945, objectives in Social Security, National Health and Public Investment designed to maintain a high and stable level of employment, with a consequently high level of national income. Already certain fundamental steps have been taken to prepare the way. The extent to which those policies have been successful up to date is shown by the fact that in his recent budget speech the Minister of Finance announced that our estimated gross national production for the current fiscal year would reach the all-time total of \$12 billion.

As for the primary producer, the Government, took steps by legislation to place floors under the prices of agricultural products during the transition period in order to ensure our farming population of an adequate return from the fruits of its labours. By a high level of employment at