

have suffered. I have seen four generations on public welfare in this country, and that is four generations too many. This bill has the possibilities of correcting that condition.

The measure recognizes a vitally important fact, namely, that money is not the complete answer to all our economic and social problems, that there is a need for education, for mental health facilities, job training, economic counselling, and other matters that have been discussed here and in committee. Moreover, the approach is such that I think it will help to break the sense of isolation, the demoralization and the feeling of hopelessness and strangulation that has plagued welfare recipients for so many days.

One of the things that troubles all of us is the means test, the needs test and the income test that came from the Senate Aging Committee.

Hon. Mr. McCutcheon: Which of course still continue under the bill.

Hon. Mr. Croll: The means test, as Senator O'Leary said, is a hangover from the Elizabethan era, but we have lived with it far too long. Now we have a needs test instead. It is an improvement; it has something about it that is really worth while, because for the first time in the history of this country we look at the totality of the family and what are its needs and how we are to meet those needs. In that respect it has much to commend it.

Of course the bill could have gone a step further and accepted the easy, handy, efficient and less costly income test, as was recommended by the Senate Committee on Aging. I presume that will come a little later after the Government has had an opportunity to weigh the wisdom of the Senate of Canada. This measure does provide a sound basis for a progressive approach to public assistance, and for the first time it gives leadership in the social welfare field which has been too long neglected. It is bold in this respect, that it guarantees to Canadians in need, as of right, a modest but adequate income. This is being done for the first time as a matter of right by virtue of the fact that the person affected is a member of a Canadian community. In addition to that, it accepts responsibility for all needs.

Hon. Mr. McCutcheon: If the provinces decide to do that.

Hon. Mr. Croll: I am sure that the various provinces are as anxious to enter into an agreement as is the federal Government itself.

As a matter of fact, three provinces have a plan like this one, or at least have been working on it for some time. The Province of Alberta, to my knowledge, has had it in effect for a period of two or three years. Manitoba is nibbling at it, and Saskatchewan has had a piece of it here and there. All of the provinces have been trying to meet the needs of the people. To that extent they have had some valuable experience.

In addition, the plan has flexibility. It is able to deal with many things that cannot now be foreseen. Of course the plan has some disadvantages too, and we might as well face up to them because it will give us an opportunity to correct them in the days ahead. In cases where a provincial government is stingy or has not the funds, the recipient can be worse off because in these matching grants the have-not government is at a great disadvantage. There is a lack of uniformity. Under the Old Age Security everybody in Canada received a fixed number of dollars. Under the family allowances they received a fixed number of dollars. That seems to be the fair way to handle the situation. However, under this measure there may be a disparity between welfare benefits in the "have" province as against welfare benefits in the "have-not" province. This condition may grow, and it is something we will have to examine from time to time.

I am not going to argue the means test, although there is a little of it still available under the categorical projects. The objection has always been that a man resents the fact that he has to prove he is a pauper. It is tough enough to be poor without having to prove it. We should be thankful that we have finally got away from it, at least in the concept in which it began. It will disappear before long and we will evolve a new scheme to meet the needs.

I said there were disparities between the "have" provinces and the "have-not" provinces. This matter should concern the Senate very much.

You will remember when we were discussing winter works that money was available on a matching basis, and Ontario and Quebec walked away with the lion's share, as they could match whatever the dominion would make available.