

*Canada Assistance Plan*

children, and it is not always obvious that the care thus provided has necessarily been beneficial, and that without the provision of more generous financial assistance, especially childrens' or family allowance, many children might not have been able to stay with their families.

I believe too that we must be aware that Canada has been much influenced by the American war on poverty. In the first place, this external influence was important in the mid-1960s when the federal Government sought to consolidate and expand the few existing cost-shared categorical income programs. The Canada Assistance Plan provided fifty-fifty cost-sharing of income assistance programs provided by the provinces to people in financial need. It also incorporated the new element of sharing the cost of personal social services provided to people in need or likely to be so.

• (1750)

So far as the social services are concerned, the Canada Assistance Plan has led to a grouping or re-grouping of services usually under the provincial departments of social services. While not exactly like the British model of free-standing social service departments, there are many similarities. This model has proved attractive in both Canada and the United States. Separation of income assistance and personal social service programs in the United States, imitated to some extent in Canada, has made it more possible to see the personal social services as a distinct sector. In both countries there has been a substantial growth in public expenditures on the personal social services since the early 1960s. In fact, so much was this the case that by the early 1970s in the United States the official view was these expenditures were uncontrollable. As a consequence, in October 1972, the United States Congress placed a ceiling on the total amount of such expenditures to be shared with the states.

One of the problems of two or more levels of government in the federal system of government is the equitable and predictable provision and distribution of public goods and services throughout the country. Personal social services have traditionally been provided by a heterogeneous set of public and private agencies in both the United States and Canada. As I indicated, the Canada Assistance Plan brought about some greater semblance of order. In the United States the 1974 Social Service Amendments, Title XX of the Social Securities Act also sought to bring greater order and equity by requiring all states to engage in a public planning process for the personal social services and, on the basis of such planning, to submit claims for revenue sharing to the federal government.

There was indeed a growth of expenditures in the social services under the CAP. Part of the growth simply represented the program maturing and being implemented. Until the early 1970s there were more children in care, and the child welfare service was growing, both in terms of staff and facilities. As in the United States the growth of expenditures did not all represent new services. It represented, rather, existing services becoming eligible for cost sharing.

There was also creation of some new sectors of provision. Child care services expanded until the mid-1970s, but the rate of growth then decreased. The growing number of old people in the general population, especially the proportion requiring institutional care brought about something of a crisis in the early 1970s. Most provinces recognized that they could not continue building and supporting more and more residential institutions. A number of comparative studies revealed that European countries in particular give much greater emphasis to community support services for the elderly and the handicapped. There was some hope that community care might be cheaper than institutional care. Not for the first time in the personal social services area, cheaper services may also be preferable from the point of view of the consumer. Many provincial governments are now providing quite extensive home care services.

The Canada Assistance Plan has itself operated with a somewhat restricted mandate. The test of financial, or potential financial, need has meant that the federal Government has not been able to encourage and assist the establishment in providing services for all income groups. Yet, what has become obvious is that child care services, home care services, homes for the aged, and so on, are needed by Canadians from all walks of life. In the early 1970s concerns about the terms of reference of the Canada Assistance Plan and public interest in the problem of poverty led the federal and provincial Governments to review their existing programs.

I think it is fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that personal social services in Canada, in both the public and private sectors, have grown significantly in the past 15 years. Their funding base is still linked in the main, however, to the financial mechanism for providing income assistance to poor people. There have not, to date, been sufficient funds available in the non-government sector to provide a wholly viable voluntary system of services. These are some of the problems.

Personally, what I believe needs to happen is a movement of personal social services from residential to a more respected and institutionalized role in our country. It is important that we, as representatives of all people in this country, ensure that social services become available to persons at all levels. I recognize that we are in a time of restraint and that scarce resources must be distributed in such a way that those who have the greatest need are cared for. At the same time, we must look to the future and recognize that each one of us, at some time in his or her life, will have a need for a social service for ourselves or for a member of our family. Who can tell when a difficult birth may result in a child being born with a handicap? Who has not had an emergency, financial, emotional or physical, when their marriage was threatened? Who will not grow older? Do we know how healthy we will be? What kind of support will we need to continue living the kind of satisfying, useful and independent life we all want to lead? We are all vulnerable. We all need social services. I believe it is imperative that our legislation and programs support these needs.