

*Canada Assistance Plan*

of the legislation. He was perfectly justified in using the words he did in praise of his bill, because that is the official position of the Canadian Welfare Council. I think, also, that some attention has to be paid to the concern expressed by Mr. Davis. A little later in my remarks I shall also refer to the quotation that the Minister of National Health and Welfare gave us last night from the most recent brief of the Canadian Labour Congress. He knows what he did. He indulged in an old trick. He read three of four sentences out of that brief, but carefully refrained from reading the two or three sentences immediately preceding the ones that he read to this house. However, I shall come to that a little later.

I have already said that there is much in this legislation which is good. Despite the fact that I may wax a little warmer when I get to the things that are disappointing, I do want to take a few minutes to express my appreciation of the importance of certain aspects in social welfare legislation that are placed before us in Bill C-207.

In the first place I am delighted to see an increase in federal financial participation in welfare programs. As a matter of fact, when one studies this bill carefully, when one has in mind the difficulties that obtain in the federal-provincial field, he can be very pleased that federal money is being made available for most of what are known as the areas of welfare work in this country.

I think the general formula that is provided, under which the federal government will pay 50 per cent of all welfare costs as defined in the legislation, plus 50 per cent of the amount that a province spends in excess of a figure in a base year, is reasonable and realistic. This is good. I am glad that more federal money is being made available to the provinces for social welfare work. I am glad that as Canadians represented by the federal authority, we are participating in social welfare work across the board.

It is also good that a step is being taken toward the superseding of the means test by the needs test in those areas where we now have means tests. I hope that if the Minister of National Health and Welfare quotes me again on this point, as he did on one other occasion, that he will note what I am saying. I am glad to see means tests that we now have in certain areas being superseded by what are called needs tests. That does not mean that I think the needs test is the last

[Mr. Knowles.]

word; neither do I approve of the introduction of a needs test in an area where we now have no test whatsoever.

In the area where means testing now takes place, however, the government is suggesting that we move out of that into an arrangement under which a person in need is to have his budgetary requirements assessed, to have his resources assessed, and then to be given such financial or other assistance as he needs to meet his situation.

It will be argued as to whether this is only a semantic difference. I think I would cast my lot in with the social welfare people generally and say that it is good to move from the means test that we now have in certain areas to needs tests in those areas. Another thing that is good about this legislation is that it recognizes at the Canada-wide level new areas of welfare work which are extremely important. I need not take time to name all such areas, but things like day care, and homemaker services stand out.

● (9:30 p.m.)

I welcome also the provision in this legislation for health care for persons in need for any of the reasons spelled out in the bill. I welcome the idea that money should be available to people in special homes, where needed. I am glad to see the federal government getting into the area of mothers' allowances and child welfare programs, at least on a financial basis. I think the work activity projects ought to be commended, as is the move to participate in Indian welfare programs. The whole idea that we should get away from the categorical concept of need to the general concept of need is certainly all to the good.

I can well imagine that social workers who are concerned with social welfare problems up to the point of retirement look upon this legislation as a most welcome document. It is highlighted by the provisions for staff training and development. The minister may say I am making a better speech than he did in support of the legislation. But he knows that my time is not yet half gone, and the other side of the story is yet to come.

Even with respect to the things in this bill which are good, I do not want the minister to think they are perfect, or the last word. After all, as his parliamentary secretary said in one of her outstanding speeches, it is not a grand new design; it is just juggling things around, tidying things up, and so on. It still leaves to the provinces the taking of the initiative in these various fields. Not one cent will go