

*Canada Assistance Plan*

program or could not be solved by any payment to a category such as old age pensioners, and could not be solved by a means test because of the particular nature of the problem. For example, there are many receiving social assistance in various areas of Canada who may have an opportunity from time to time to earn some additional income. I have come across this problem quite often. I find that if one member of the family, say the son of a widow, is able to find employment, his social assistance allowance accordingly is diminished or perhaps cut out, even though the young man needed the income, independent of his mother's income and was hoping to use it in order to get himself a start in life.

● (5:50 p.m.)

There are many such examples of where our approach to social security has failed because we have really lacked a sound and reasoned philosophy of social security that sees the problem in the light of rehabilitation and prevention. I think that these are the main areas which are attractive about the Canada Assistance Plan.

The minister gave us quite a lengthy discourse on the features of the plan. I noticed that one of the earlier speakers today was making reference to children. Again this matter can be covered in the Canada Assistance Plan, and the problem met.

Another feature of this plan which I believe is a major step in our war on poverty is that this plan will support welfare services which are provided as part of community development programs, in so far as these programs can be employed as a means of helping public assistance recipients, or those likely to need assistance, if such provision is not made, to achieve the greatest possible measure of self-support. This is the kind of flexibility we have lacked in our approach, up until this day, to social security.

There are a number of other features of the plan which lend themselves I think to our wholehearted support. Related to the matter I have just discussed are the provisions for work activity programs. I think there are particular areas in Canada, as Mr. Speaker is well aware, where the opportunities for employment, for one reason or another, are not as great as they are generally across Canada. Because of this, many people have been forced to seek social assistance. Some of the people have been able to move from these areas, but one of the things I have found from talking to people in such areas is a genuine desire to work.

[Mr. Cashin.]

There are perhaps many socially useful projects which could be undertaken to give these people the opportunity, in a dignified way, to earn their own income. Perhaps it would also give them the opportunity for some additional schooling or additional training on such projects which could be even more useful to them. This is something that up until now we have not been able to do in this co-ordinated way, and I think that this aspect represents one of the most imaginative features of the plan.

I know for a fact that this particular aspect appeals strongly to the Newfoundland federation of labour which, in their submissions to the provincial government, have advocated this kind of approach for some time. I also know that the provincial government of Newfoundland welcomes the opportunity to participate in this kind of program.

One could go on and talk about many examples of the usefulness of this plan. I think it is natural, when we are discussing assistance to the needy, that the problem of the old age pensioner should be brought up. However, I also think we have to recognize in the development of social security in this country that when the original universal pension was brought in in the early fifties it was not designed to provide complete support. If it was, then it has certainly failed in that particular. At best it was an income supplement.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that whatever the figure fixed upon for payments to all individuals in a particular category, there will still exist individuals in that category who will have particular needs and who will require extra assistance. It is this approach to social security that makes this plan stand out from all others, which distinguishes it as unique.

There is another aspect of the plan I should like to mention. I have heard both in parliament and outside of parliament the criticism that one of the weaknesses—politically, if you will—of the plan is that it does not do something immediately and quickly, and in one swift payment, for those who will benefit from the plan. The people who make this suggestion in my view do not understand the problem. Because when we are dealing particularly with the unfortunate people who have been for many generations living off welfare, we are dealing with a complicated problem. There is little likelihood that any