

Canada Assistance Plan

A number of experiments respecting the guaranteed annual income have been carried out in this country. One was in Manitoba. The advantage of a guaranteed annual income over social welfare programs is that it provides incentives for those on welfare and our working poor to seek employment because the level of assistance received is graduated. If someone earns money, he does not necessarily lose the financial assistance being provided by the community as a whole.

The guaranteed annual income program has that advantage. It has other economic advantages in the sense that it will continue to ensure that people have money in their hands in order to purchase the necessities of life. That provides a demand for goods and keeps other people working.

It is very clear that we have to come to grips with the notion of providing sufficient employment so that there will be sufficient wealth to meet the needs of all of us. I suggest we again examine the idea of a guaranteed annual income in terms of its impact on demand and, in turn, keeping the economic engines of this country moving.

The Canada Assistance Plan has served this country well. If the Government moves to the point where it is going to re-examine this, I hope it does not make the mistake it has made in other social areas it has touched on to date, that is, withdraw its commitment, withdraw its money and retard advances we have made in terms of human need in the past.

Even though we are in an economic crisis, we must first consider the needs of the individual in this country. It is only on the basis of considering the basic human needs of all Canadians that we can ever hope to build a sane and rational economy, one that can function and provide employment and income for all and allow us to provide assistance to those who cannot provide for themselves.

Mr. Jim Schroder (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on this motion concerning the Canada Assistance Plan. The Canada Assistance Plan Agreement between Canada and all Provinces and Territories as well as the amendments to schedules under the Agreement are public documents and, further to his request, the Hon. Member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) has received a copy of all agreements.

The Canada Assistance Plan, which was established in 1966, is still one of the Government's major vehicles for responding to the need of Canadians for income and social services in times of difficulty. These programs, which are of such importance to a great number of Canadians, are cost-shared by the federal Government through the provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan.

In an effort to help Canadians increase their understanding of an important social welfare program, an information pamphlet describing the Plan has been distributed to all recipients of federal pensions and family allowances. The pamphlet is available upon request from the Department of National Health and Welfare.

The social service area of the Plan is perhaps the lesser known provision of the Plan, and I would like to make some remarks on this from a Canadian social context. This will enlarge somewhat on the remarks made by the Hon. Member for Vaudreuil.

Generally we may say that personal social services are those professional and voluntary services which complement, supplement or are in place of services and care rendered by families or friends on an individual basis to relatives, friends or other individuals, but it may also be recognized that many of the ills that beset us in life are unsought. We do not voluntarily lose families and friends, become old or handicapped. The personal social services have been created to meet and mitigate some of these personal needs we may all experience.

As soon as we begin to think holistically about this set of services, we may also begin to recognize that these services are far from comprehensive and far from meeting all recognized needs, let alone those unrecognized or likely to emerge as our society changes.

It is one of life's ironies that personal social services have come to be recognized as a definite sector of services at the very moment when economic prosperity has itself come under challenge in North America.

Modern personal social services have evolved from institutional forms for care provided in the past for the more indigent, elderly and handicapped of the general public. It is perhaps because there was really no satisfactory place for children in Poor Law institutions that a variety of special institutions were created for young people who were beyond or without the care and control of their families or were delinquent. But industrial schools and reformatories did not stem the tide of children and young people who were needing some form of care. The creation of juvenile courts and the child welfare services was a response to the perceived needs of these children.

Personal social services still consist in large measure of institutional, that is residential, provisions and provisions which seek either to provide a substitute family or to support people in their own home.

It may be appropriate at this stage to recognize the inter-relationship between the early child welfare services and the first measures of financial support, which was mother's allowances, given to families, especially widows who have children. What was recognized in the early years of this century is that children in single parent families are likely to be economically, if not socially, disadvantaged.

In the early days of the child welfare services, it was recognized that in the absence of some financial support being provided to vulnerable families, many more children were likely to be brought into care. Viewed in this way, mother's allowances were thus seen to be a preventive measure and they were the ancestor of most of our modern income assistance programs.

Notwithstanding this financial provision, the child welfare services have been called on to care for many thousands of