

*Canada Assistance Plan*

word had a hollow ring and, certainly, at the very best he was no better than the worst insinuations he has made about members on this side on many occasions. I suppose we have to be a little charitable in dealing with this group because they have never had the responsibility of governing this country. The action that they took today indicated they would never really deserve the trust of the people, because heaven knows what they would do with that responsibility. However, all this is conjecture, because it is most unlikely to happen.

I must say that I have followed the debate closely today because I have found it interesting. I have followed many of the observations made about the Canada Assistance Plan outside parliament. I have found that there is perhaps a misunderstanding of the import of this legislation and what it is trying to do, of its vital necessity as a fundamental ingredient of our whole approach to social security. I might say that, surprisingly enough, in reading the speeches in *Hansard*, it seems that the hon. member for Portage-Neepawa (Mr. Enns) and the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard), showed more understanding of this plan than those members of the New Democratic Party who hold themselves out as our saviours.

I was quite shocked and alarmed myself, because it seemed to me that this group which has advocated that we do novel, imaginative things, that we break new ground, who are always planning and always criticizing by saying that we are not moving fast enough, would have welcomed this measure with much more enthusiasm than they have. They have certainly shown their colours by their action today. This misunderstanding has existed, I think, because of a misconception of our whole approach to welfare. Over the last 30 years we have been building in this country a body of laws under the general heading of social security. Those people who were charged with administering these laws, groups such as the Canadian Labour Congress or the Welfare Council, and others who have taken an interest in a more direct way in welfare in this country, have been agitating for a long time that what this country needs is a sound, comprehensive philosophy of social security. In the past, our approach has been a patchwork and this has created many anomalies.

I might say that our approach falls into three separate categories. First, and I am not taking them in order of development, there is

our social insurance program such as the Canada Pension Plan and unemployment insurance. This is one aspect of social security. There is another aspect that perhaps may be under the general heading of welfare and that is now disposed of on the basis of a means test. The third approach would be those payments that are made in respect of a category. Within those three prongs of our approach to welfare over the past 30 years, there has been one very basic neglect, and that is particularly in the case of the categorical payments of such as old age pensions and the payment of social assistance on the basis of a means test. What we have been doing really has been to attempt to give to those people a supplementary form of income. We have had a restricted approach because of the nature of the means test. This has happened because in dealing with the categories we have been restricted, because up until now it has been impossible to make a payment in a category that will meet the needs of all those in that category.

I think those who have studied this matter have suggested rightly that what has been needed, if you will, is a philosophy of social security that would embody the principle of prevention and rehabilitation. Up until now, little or no effort has been made in this direction. It is in this area that the Canada Assistance Plan breaks new ground, because not only does it give an opportunity to the provinces to bring all of their related programs into one, but it gives them more flexibility and more scope in dealing with those areas that require attention. There has been a suggestion, even from the enlightened ones in the New Democratic Party, that the means test and the needs test are the same. I have even listened to leading individual newspaper personalities make great pronouncements on this. It would seem from what they have had to say that many of the people who have been talking about this measure are, to say the least, misinformed. There is certainly a distinction, subtle, but a distinction, between the means test and the needs test.

The latter gives those agencies charged with this problem more scope and more flexibility. I think many members of parliament have come across deserving people who could not be helped by any of the existing approaches in our general welfare schemes in Canada. The reason for this has been that the problems with which we were confronted could not be solved by any social insurance