

4. I should like to comment now on the suggestion contained in your brief that the Federal Government should permit the admission to Canada in connection with World Refugee Year of numbers of refugee children, regardless of their origin, under a plan which would contemplate their legal adoption by families in Canada. This is, as you will readily appreciate, a complicated problem, primarily because the exclusive jurisdiction with respect to legal adoption rests with the provincial governments. The child-welfare departments of the provinces and the child-welfare agencies throughout Canada have at the present time large numbers of children in their care and, while not all of them by any means can be considered eligible for adoption under the standards set by the provincial authorities and adoption agencies in Canada, there are, none the less, substantial numbers of Canadian-born children who might be considered for adoption in Canadian homes if standards comparable to those which would have to be considered for refugee children were to be applied in connection with our own Canadian children.

The department concerned has been in touch with the various provincial child-welfare authorities in this matter and has sought their reaction to your proposal. While yet to hear from a number of the provincial governments as to their views, the conclusion has been arrived at that, in individual cases, prospective adoptive parents in Canada may apply for the admission of an individual orphan refugee child, to be brought to Canada for purposes of legal adoption subject to two provisos, namely: (a) in such cases the provincial child-welfare authority concerned shall have approved the application and confirmed that suitable Canadian children are not available, and (b) shall have undertaken to give continuing supervision to the proposed adoption during the probationary period required by provincial laws -- when these provisos have been complied with, arrangements will be made by the federal authorities which will permit the admission of such a child to Canada.

5. I come finally to your recommendation that the Federal Government, in consultation with the provinces, should accept responsibility for providing established public-health and welfare services for privately-sponsored refugee families admitted to Canada under the special programme which has been in effect during World Refugee Year. You will have noted in this connection the results of recent negotiations with the Province of Ontario, which have resulted in an announcement by the government of that province that, while they are not in a position to assist in the provision of transportation costs or the maintenance and care of privately-sponsored refugee families during the first six months of their stay in Ontario, the Ontario government, at the expiration of six months, will provide necessary welfare assistance to these privately-sponsored refugee families, if they should find themselves in need of it.

The assistance being provided by the Ontario government in accordance with this announcement will be that normally provided to persons in need throughout the province under the provincial general welfare assistance act, or other appropriate legislative enactments. In most of these arrangements the Federal Government, under existing legislation, shares the cost of assistance provided.

I am sure you will agree that the announcement made by the Ontario government in this matter will do much to facilitate the working out of arrangements for the private sponsorship of refugee families and, if other provincial governments agree to similar arrangements, it will do much to meet the objectives which your Council had in mind in presenting the recommendation concerning the acceptance of public responsibility in this matter.