

Jurisdictional Problems

There have been suggestions that the burden of sponsorship is too heavy for most Canadian voluntary groups to accept, and in March the Canadian Welfare Council presented to the Government a number of recommendations designed, among other things, to facilitate the sponsorship of handicapped refugees by limiting the responsibilities placed on sponsors. This involves a question of financial arrangements between the federal authorities and the provinces and I need hardly tell you that questions involving federal and provincial jurisdiction are extremely complex. The matter is further complicated by the fact that present arrangements between the Federal Government and the various provinces are not uniform, and the question of changing existing arrangements for an indefinite period is one that requires careful study, and often long periods of negotiation before final agreement can be reached. I can assure you that the government departments concerned have been carefully studying all aspects of this problem over the past two or three months. It has been the view of the Government for the reasons just expressed that it was not essential to complete this study before the end of WRY, since the arrangements for sponsorship which have been in effect during WRY will continue in the future. It is, of course, open to the provinces and the municipalities to alter their present rules of eligibility for welfare assistance. Ontario, for example, has reduced the period of residence required in order to claim such benefits to six months in the case of handicapped refugees.

At the present time, although the Federal Government has not taken its final decision on the responsibilities of sponsorship, there are 100 handicapped cases (involving a total of 249 persons) that are now being processed by the Immigration Branch. These 100 cases are being sponsored by community groups, and voluntary or religious organizations and do not include cases being sponsored by relatives in Canada. The groups that have undertaken to sponsor refugees deserve the warmest commendation and it is gratifying to know that they are finding the responsibilities of sponsorship are not, in fact, a prohibitive burden. I am informed by the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration that there is no sign that the interest in private sponsorship of refugees will slacken at the end of WRY. It seems probable, therefore, that the private sponsorship programme will permit a significant contribution to be made to the programme for the resettlement of European refugees.

Admission of TB Patients

The Government's major special contribution to WRY is, of course, the programme for the admission of tuberculous refugees and their families to Canada for treatment and rehabilitation. In considering what special contribution could be made, the Government had in mind the fact that a large number of refugees who had been in the European camps for a prolonged period had developed tuberculosis and it was extremely difficult to persuade countries of immigration to accept these refugees. If the European camps were to be closed, it was necessary to make some arrangements to relocate the hard-core cases, of which the most notable segment were those suffering from TB.