

*Canada Assistance Plan*

expressed the view that there is a need for new ways of helping persons who may appear to be able to work but who, because of personal and family circumstances or problems of motivation, are not able to obtain or hold employment or take advantage of the training and rehabilitation resources that are already available in the community.

The types of project that this part foresees will be experimental. We are hopeful, however, that under it measures can be developed through which sound work habits can be attained within a setting which provides counselling and similar welfare services. Similar efforts are being made in other countries; examples are the re-establishment centres which are operated by the National Assistance Board in the United Kingdom and the work experience programs in the United States.

It is also proposed that this part of the plan should be used to provide work for persons with physical or mental handicaps who can be employed if given an opportunity to develop their potential. These will include the retarded and the severely handicapped who can be helped to engage in some form of productive activity. Contributions will be made toward the salaries of personnel operating such projects and allowances paid to participants in them.

Agreements made under this part will contain safeguards to provide assurance that projects are not used to limit the right of any person in need to assistance and provisions under which welfare services will be made available as required. Because of the relationship of these measures to manpower programs, arrangements are included for close co-ordination of the administration of this part of the bill with those services.

Parts IV and V of the legislation have the effect of amending several associated statutes. Significant among these are the amendments to the Old Age Assistance Act, the Blind Persons Act, and the Disabled Persons Act that are referred to in part V. As I have indicated previously, the provinces may if they wish discontinue their old age assistance and blind and disabled persons allowance programs and assist the groups now covered by them under a comprehensive needs test measure coming within the scope of the plan.

Part V covers the steps that this transition may involve. A province may indicate its intention to cease accepting new applications while continuing to provide categorical

benefits to those now receiving allowances. Alternatively, a province may cease taking applications and also undertake to transfer those in the existing caseload that can qualify under its integrated program. If the latter step is taken, part V provides that transfers may be made only when the recipient will receive at least as much under the new program as he was receiving previously.

Part IV has the effect of removing from the Unemployment Assistance Act the exclusion of mothers' allowances that it now contains. This change will enable the provinces to receive the funds that the plan provides for assistance to needy mothers with effect from April 1, 1966, and will authorize this reimbursement without waiting for agreements to be signed under the plan.

Part IV also extends the contracting-out provisions of the Established Programs (Interim Arrangements) Act to the Canada Assistance Plan. As I mentioned during the debate on the resolution, this is consistent with existing arrangements since the plan will cover the area now referred to in the Established Programs (Interim Arrangements) Act as the "special welfare program." That program is made up of unemployment assistance, old age assistance, blind persons allowances and disabled persons allowances.

• (9:50 p.m.)

Several hon. members have spoken at length on the question of income support for the aged as it relates to the plan. What has not been recognized in some instances is that the Canada Assistance Plan is a program for persons in need in all age groups.

No modern industrial nation, no matter what other range of social security measures it may have, has been able to dispense with a general social assistance program. Universal flat-rate payments and social insurance programs are in every case complemented by social assistance provisions. Many hon. members of this house, and others before them, have spoken of the need in Canada to improve our social assistance programs as a part of the social security structure. You have before you now a measure that will do just that. We are in general agreement, I believe, that we should do our best to minimize the reliance on social assistance, but that objective must not deter us from proceeding with the development of a sound and effective public assistance program.