

has been persistent underemployment and economic stagnation.

Third, because much of our worst poverty and waste of human resources is rural, the government proposes to extend the work of ARDA by creating a special fund to be available for development projects. Of course, Mr. Speaker, this has been referred to: We propose an organization through which young Canadians will have the opportunity to put their idealism and their talents to work for projects of economic and social development both in Canada and abroad. This Company of Young Canadians—which I suspect, sir, will soon be designated as the eager beavers—will be organized to work closely with, but not to replace, the many excellent voluntary undertakings which are now going forward and which can back up and support it if they wish to continue as voluntary agencies. Therefore I propose to appoint, without delay, an organizing committee to report what most needs to be done so that we can submit proposals to parliament at an early date.

• (5:40 p.m.)

Mr. Diefenbaker: Would the Prime Minister say how many are envisaged as the initial number?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I do not know why all the hooting. The plan has been made and I am asking for information. I thought hon. members would be interested.

Mr. Pearson: When we have canvassed the work being done—and there is some very good work being done in this field—and the resources which these voluntary organizations have and what they need to supplement their work, and when they are in a position to decide what can usefully be done by a significant number of Canadians who are not in any voluntary organizations but who might wish to join the company of Canadian youth, then we will be in a position to decide how far we can go. But I do give the right hon. gentleman that assurance, and I hope that these resources will be available to include in this kind of undertaking all the young people who desire to take part in it.

The fifth item in the immediate program is the Canadian assistance plan, which the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss LaMarsh) will be presenting this Thursday at a conference with the provincial ministers of welfare. Because that meeting is taking place this week I propose now to give the house a

comparatively detailed outline of what we have in mind for submission to the provinces.

The Canada assistance plan is, I believe, an important further step in the development of Canada's social security system. It is a companion measure to the Canada pension plan. The origin of this new plan goes back to the discussions with the provincial governments concerning the Canada pension plan which were held in September of 1963. The need was recognized at that time for an improved public assistance program, and since that time a number of discussions have been carried forward with the provinces.

In developing the new plan the government has taken into consideration the views of the public accounts committee, which in its fourth report to the present parliament recommended the amendment or replacement of the Unemployment Assistance Act and the closer co-ordination of all measures in the field of public assistance. The government has taken note also of the wide support for a comprehensive program of public assistance that has been expressed by welfare organizations and authorities, including the Canadian Welfare Council.

The plan now being proposed will provide a framework for federal-provincial co-operation in helping those who need help the most. The plan will encourage a co-ordinated approach to public assistance, in place of the present patchwork of support under four federal statutes—the Old Age Assistance Act of 1951, the Blind Persons Act of 1951, the Disabled Persons Act of 1954 and the Unemployment Assistance Act of 1956.

A number of provinces, Mr. Speaker, have already expressed their wish to develop a comprehensive general assistance measure which, while recognizing the varying requirements of different groups, would meet these requirements within one program and within one administrative framework. It may be possible that some provinces will want to continue to assist the aged, the blind and the disabled under the existing programs. This is a matter for decision by the provinces, and federal support for those programs will continue at the option of the province. If, however, provinces accept the new plan—and their interest leads us to think that many of them will—then there will be no longer an income limitation on the assistance available to people now covered by old age assistance. As hon. members know, federal sharing under the present program is now limited to half of the \$75 a month. Under the proposed Can-