

*Government Orders*

• (1520)

Under the plan the federal government agreed to share fifty-fifty the costs incurred by provinces and municipalities in providing social assistance and welfare services to needy Canadians.

This is a mandatory program. It is the responsibility of the federal government. It is the responsibility of the provinces and the municipalities to see that everyone in this country has a roof over their head, food on their table and is able to participate as a normal citizen.

Unlike other income maintenance programs, which establish conditions for eligibility, social assistance is the program of last resort. Once eligibility and entitlement have been determined, according to provincial legislation, the provincial or municipal agency delivering this program cannot refuse. It cannot refuse to provide that assistance and this government is cutting back on that money.

In other words, the government is refusing to provide the adequate basic services to people in this country who are in dire need. The primary objective of the plan is twofold: to support the provinces in the extension of adequate assistance for persons in need—and this is what the government is pulling back on—and to support the provinces in the delivery of welfare services fashioned to lessen or eradicate the effects of such social afflictions as poverty, child neglect or dependence on social assistance.

CAP has in essence created the foundation upon which Canada's social security system has been built, a system that has contributed to the unity of this country by fostering equality of regions and equality of people.

Recipients included under the Canada Assistance Plan are people in homes for special care, homes for the aged, nursing homes, hostels for transients, child care institutions, homes for unmarried mothers and many others. In areas of health care, in areas of child welfare, in areas of welfare service, it is a known fact, not only in this country but in all countries around the world, that children from homes who are provided welfare have a much higher rate of not going to university, not carrying on their education, of health care problems and many other problems.

These are the people who are going to be suffering. These are the most vulnerable people of our society. The

assistance they receive comes in the form of dental care, essential living services for disabled persons, foster homes for abused children, safe housing for abused women, social assistance when they are unable to find a job.

The provinces affected by this legislation, which are Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta, are the only provinces that today do not receive federal equalization payments from the Government of Canada. In other words, the Government of Canada calls these three provinces the have provinces.

As of March 1990 half of the poor families of Canada, 54 per cent of all welfare recipients under CAP, were living in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. When we should be looking for ways to get these people off of social assistance, we are having to stand here today and debate whether those who are in need will be able to get social assistance. I find it absolutely ludicrous.

The government again is failing to realize that at this time of recession people are already suffering. Interest rates remain high, the Canadian dollar remains high, unemployment remains unacceptably high with the end not in sight for some time. Unprecedented levels of bankruptcy, especially in this province of Ontario, exist in this country, and there have been permanent losses of thousands of jobs in the manufacturing sector in Ontario. All of the above crises are happening right here. They are right here at home.

The government says: "Don't worry about the CAP. It only affects the three richest or have provinces". This province, in which I live, could very well become one of the have not provinces.

I would like to know who is going to support it, and who is going to support 50 per cent of the welfare recipients in this province. When will this government wake up and realize that there are no more have provinces because of its own policies?

In the 1990 budget the government announced that growth in CAP transfers was to be limited to 5 per cent for Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario in the fiscal years of 1990-91 and 1991-92.

In the 1991 budget the government extended the ceiling on these three provinces. It capped transfers for three more years through the fiscal years of 1994 and 1995. After that, the government assumes that CAP