

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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CANADA'S PATTERN FOR PROGRESS

An address by Hon. Paul Martin, Minister
of National Health and Welfare, Ottawa,
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1. SOCIAL SECURITY AND HUMAN WELFARE

"The era of freedom will be achieved only as social security and human welfare become the main concern of men and nations."

That is the challenge to Canada that the prime minister made five years ago in addressing a great labour federation. The National Health Programme, announced a month ago, is the latest advance towards building in Canada that distinctive structure of social welfare measures that is so important in the Canadian pattern for progress.

No one who has read the history of the past century can fail to be heartened by the tremendous increase in productivity that has been experienced by countries like Canada that have brought all the techniques of modern science into full use in man's service. But as the productivity and wealth of this country have developed, it has become more and more evident to its citizens that there is no reason why all who are willing to work should not have a fair share in the national estate to which they are contributing. This has been the high purpose of social legislation - to see that every Canadian has a fair chance and reasonable protection against the unavoidable hazards and insecurities of our life.

2. THE BASIS FOR SOCIAL SECURITY

In any plan for national social security, first things must come first. The first essential is to create conditions in which there is the maximum of opportunity for private enterprise, within the bounds of responsibility. Every encouragement must be given both by private industry and by government measures to maintain employment and national income at consistently high levels. The next essential is to see that every Canadian who is willing to work can find work and can receive wages or returns for his primary products that are fair and sufficient to maintain his family income at a wholesome and stable level.

The secret and enduring strength of democracy is that it reflects the considered aspirations of the people. A democratic government cannot be static nor tied to any set formula. In Canada the growing popular conviction that the strength of the nation should support those who need help has brought into being the great social measures which so firmly buttress the Canadian economy. We must remember that we are living in a world of rapid change, and that our social welfare policies and goals must constantly be adjusted to the changing world around us.

It is a mark of our modern civilization that city life is necessarily much more dependent than rural life. Canada in the last generation has developed from a largely agricultural nation to a nation that is primarily industrial. In our economy more and more people are entirely dependent on their jobs, which can be affected by many factors

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over which the individual worker has no control.

It is inherent in the nature of things that the industrial system that makes possible our national wealth and abundant productivity also lessens the individual security of our citizens. Yet this does not mean that we must revert from our present high level of industrial activity to a simpler and more secure but less productive way of life. It is so obviously desirable to go after the highest possible level of efficiency in national production that we must offset the resultant uncertainties of our system with measures for social security.

The war proved to all of us the tremendous potential of this country and strengthened our resolve that we would not again let economic recession stifle our economy as it did in the "Thirties". We now realize that when economic conditions require corrective action -- and that is long before the nation is in serious difficulties -- action must be taken. Unemployment must be combatted by public investment projects both to provide work and to develop the nation's wealth for further advances. Consumer purchasing power must likewise be maintained when unemployment threatens and in this the social security payments of the federal, provincial and municipal governments are a powerful stabilizing factor.

3. WELFARE MEASURES IN CANADA

In the past twenty years much has been done towards establishing an adequate foundation for a social security programme in Canada. The provinces have developed vital programmes in the field of public health and social services to include child welfare services, public health laboratories, homes for the aged and infirm, as well as the operation of mental hospitals. Programmes of public assistance, mothers' allowances, assistance to hospitals in caring for destitute patients -- all are features of the provincial and municipal services.

In the field of federal responsibility we have provided certain fundamental measures for social security. We have established Old Age Pensions, Unemployment Insurance and the National Employment Service, Family Allowances and the great legislation of the Veterans Charter. We have brought into being progressive measures like the National Housing Act and such great measures for our farm communities as the Agricultural Prices Support Programme, Farm Loans and the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act.

4. THE MAJOR SOCIAL MEASURES

I should like to review with you some of the thinking behind the various federal social security measures that give such stability to the Canadian economy.

(1) First of all, there is the Old Age Pensions measure that became law 21 years ago. In any survey of the Canadian scene, it is evident that many families and many individuals have incomes that simply do not permit of saving for old age and retirement. And yet, in a modern state, it is agreed that national wealth is built by everyone who works. Therefore, it is now commonly agreed that if citizens of this country come into old age without sufficient savings to allow them to retire from work, the Government should take steps to see that some of the national wealth returns to them in pensions. More than a quarter of a million needy Canadians of 70 years and over are now under the protection of this pensions plan. In the next twelve months, almost \$100,000,000 will flow out from the federal and provincial treasuries to assist Canada's aged and blind citizens.

(2) Just as it was realized that it is not always possible

for the citizen to provide for his old age, it was realized that the wage structure on which our industrial economy is based cannot be related to the number of children in a family. Family Allowances have proved very successful in Canada in overcoming this inequality between family incomes. They equalize the opportunity for children and help provide them with food, clothing, shelter and educational opportunities to make them productive citizens. Family Allowances, which now pay \$22,000,000 a month to 3,750,000 children, represent an important investment in the future of Canada.

(3) Another great federal social measure is the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1940 which took account of the fact that many workers are unable at times to find employment. Through the insurance plan, by which small regular payments give protection against large irregular risks, reserves of \$450,000,000 have been built against the unavoidable loss of work. Some 3,000,000 of Canada's workers are under the protection of this great measure.

5. NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAMME

I should like now to outline briefly the new National Health Programme. I have no doubt that you have read about this \$30,000,000 annual programme which marks such a tremendous step towards providing better health services for all Canadians.

As health is primarily a provincial responsibility, federal expenditures on health were formerly not very considerable. Some idea of the increased interest of the Federal Government in Canada's health is seen in the fact that -- apart from health services for veterans -- federal health expenditures will now be four times what they formerly were.

This programme for Canada's national health opens a new era in Canadian health history. I found universal agreement among the provincial health authorities who met in Ottawa last week that this programme would represent a very important addition to their efforts. In the closest cooperation, we can look forward to greatly increased health activity from which every citizen should benefit.

(a) Health Survey Grants

As you know, the National Health Programme is divided into three main parts. First, there are the Health Survey Grants, totalling \$625,000, which are to be distributed among the provinces to enable them to study their health and hospital needs, and to make plans from which a provincial health insurance scheme could be developed. In addition there are the National Health Grants and the Hospital Construction Grants.

(b) National Health Grants

The National Health Grants will total \$17,000,000 in the first year, and later rise to \$23,000,000 annually. There are eight separate grants to encourage increased activity in the fields of public health, public health research, to train new public health workers, and to accelerate the attacks on tuberculosis, cancer, mental illness, venereal disease and conditions that cripple children.

(c) Hospital Construction Grants

The third important section of the National Health Programme is the provision for assistance to the provinces for hospital construction. These grants should make possible not only the encouragement of large urban hospitals but also of small hospital units or nursing stations in the more remote rural areas.

6. SECURITY MAKES FOR PROSPERITY

I have given a few of the highlights of Canada's federal social security pattern. These measures, I believe, constitute a powerful incentive and guarantee of continuing prosperity and continuing security for the individual citizen and the Canadian family. In all action to raise the Canadian level of life by opening markets abroad for our products and by strengthening our domestic markets, I am certain that we are building enduring foundations for continuing prosperity, in which all these social security measures then appear as wise investments in stability.

It is a significant reflection that social justice is, after all, the best policy for government. Above all other considerations, a democratic government must be concerned for individual welfare. But it must not lose sight of the fact that individual security cannot really be protected by government action unless the basis of security is first provided. That means high national employment and national income figures and the creation of conditions favourable for the continuance of national employment and income at high levels.

In a bankrupt state there can be no such thing as citizen security. No one is interested in a fair share of scarcity. The first objective of any Canadian Government must be to build an enduring prosperity. The second objective must be to ensure by all sensible measures that everyone who is willing to work has a fair chance to get a satisfactory income, and that everyone who is unable to work should be brought under the broad protection of some social security measure.

In the past generation, Canada has come far along the road to a full programme for social security. Our incentive is an all-important one: to answer social need and social justice. In generously building defences for each citizen against the unavoidable hazards of life, this country will also be acting wisely -- for there can be no enduring prosperity if anything blocks the free flowing down of the nation's productivity to its people.