1965
MAY

ADDRESS GIVEN AT THE SILVER ANNIVERSARY BANQUET

OF

THE EDMONTON WELFARE COUNCIL

BY

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MAY 5, 1965

May I first of all extend my thanks to the officers of the Edmonton Welfare Council for inviting me to participate in its 25th Anniversary Observances. Although the Canadian Welfare Council cannot rightfully claim parenthood for the Edmonton Welfare Council, it can at least take credit for having put the gleam into the parents' eye which eventually led to this Council's conception. As no doubt many of you know, one recommendation coming out of the Canadian Welfare Council survey in this city back in 1928 was that the social agencies in Edmonton form a Council. It is not surprising, therefore, that over the years our two organizations have been in constant touch, and have lived through all the vicissitudes experienced by any council operating locally or nationally.

Anniversaries are always appropriate occasions to get our perspectives in shape - to pause for a moment and reflect upon the past in order that we might best understand the present and plan most effectively for the future.

Let us look for a moment into our past. In the lives of nations one hundred years is but a brief period of time. Our span of nationhood is therefore a relative short one. Yet, in the years since Confederation this country has undergone tremendous social and economic changes. At the time of Confederation only three and a half million people lived in the British North American Colonies; more than 80 per cent of the population was rural as compared to 30 per cent today; Montreal had a population of only 100,000; Toronto barely 30,000; Edmonton wasn't incorporated as even a town until 1892, and at the turn of the century had a population of only 2,626; two-thirds of the Canadian population was under 29 years of age. The family provided for its members not only in times of health, but normally looked after them when they were sick, old, or unable to work.

It is little wonder, in view of the social conditions, that the need for major public welfare programmes seemed remote. The spirit of the times was perhaps best reflected in a speech by Sir John A. MacDonald in 1867 when he said: "hopefully a time will soon come when private charity will relieve the governments of all their existing commitments for public welfare". Not surprisingly, public responsibility for health and welfare was left to the existing provincial and municipal authorities rather than being assumed by the new Federal Government. In fact, during the first 30 years of Confederation no government at any level assumed much responsibility for the health and welfare of its citizens. A window through which we can peer and catch a glimpse of the under-developed social services in Canada is provided by an Ontario report on the prison and reformatory system published in 1891, which said "a general complaint of jail officials is that they cannot classify prisoners or enforce strict discipline in jail because of the presence of large numbers of vagrants, paupers, mentally ill, old people, and unemployed".

The whole concept of social justice was, to say the least, not well developed. A House of Commons debate shows how often human well-being and suffering were considered in crass monetary terms. For example, one member said: "if we can save the lives of at least 4,000 of our people annually, what a triumph that would be. Economic authorities place the value of human life to the State at some $1,000 to $1,500. It is easy to see the financial gain that will come to this Dominion if we can effect this saving of life".

By the end of the century a Dominion Director General of Public Health, with very limited functions, had been appointed. Symptomatic of the times, he was responsible to the Minister of Agriculture. In 1905, the year Alberta entered Confederation, 8,000 Canadians died from T.B., and an estimated 40,000 were suffering from it. Yet only one province, Nova Scotia, operated a sanatorium with 18 beds. Private charity, meanwhile, operated 6 sanatoria with 234 beds throughout the entire country. It was the disease of T.B., so closely related to poverty and expensive to treat, which began to make Canadians realize the limitations of health and welfare programmes financed and operated chiefly by local municipalities. The T.B. rate usually was the highest in the poorest municipalities which were, therefore, the least able to provide the services and facilities required.

The first two decades of this century also provided Canadians with some shocking revelations about their standard of living. This frontier society just wasn't breeding the rugged healthy individuals that had been supposed. Over 50 per cent of all young men called to military service for the first world war had to be rejected as medically unfit. Canadians, too, learned for the first time that their rate of infant mortality was vastly higher than that of any other industrialized nation. In 1918 the Canadian Manufacturers' Association and the Trades and Labour Congress joined forces to present a brief urging the Federal Government to establish a Bureau of Public Welfare "to deal with such matters as health, sanitation, town planning, housing plans, accident prevention, and every other matter pertaining to the physical efficiency of the nation". In response to this brief, the Department of Public Health was established in 1919. In this same year Alberta appointed its first Minister of Health. But it was not until 1944 that the Federal Health Department was expanded to include welfare. Again in the same year the Alberta Public Welfare Department was established.

The Federal Old Age Pensions Act of 1928, administered by the provinces, proved to be a milestone in the development of the Federal Government's role in Canadian social services. Now for the first time, the resources of that government

were pledged on a permanent basis to support an income maintenance programme administered by the provinces. We were a full generation behind New Zealand, Australia and Great Britain, although we were about eight years in advance of such a federal move in the United States. But this action revealed a willingness to experiment and assume leadership within a difficult constitutional setting, and it was the forerunner of other Federal/Provincial shared-cost categorical social assistance programmes to the blind, the disabled, and so on, which eventually culminated in the recently proposed Canada Assistance Plan.

The great depression and the mass unemployment of the hungry 30's brought into sharp focus the need for some kind of publicly sponsored insurance against unemployment, although it was not until 1940 that our present Federal unemployment legislation was enacted. In that same year you will recall the Edmonton Council of Social Agencies came into being. With the passage of the unemployment insurance legislation the concept of social insurance became a part of the Canadian system of social services. It was a very different concept from the 19th century attitude of poor relief for the incompetent which had dominated public welfare policy until then.

Just as the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1940 had introduced the principle of social insurance, so the Family Allowance Act of 1944 marked the entrance of still another major concept in our social services, namely that of universal payments and income re-distribution - the payment of welfare benefits to all, irrespective of income or status. The extent to which these universal payments have become part of our total health and welfare expenditures is remarkable. It has been estimated that in the last 20 years $40 billion had been spent on health and welfare programmes in Canada. Out of these $40 billion approximately $15 billion have been spent on the two major universal programmes, Family Allowances and Old Age Security, which was implemented in 1951. Indeed, by 1951 Canadians had come a long way from the early 1900's in their social thinking, when old age pensions had been regarded as a "direct discouragement to the habit of saving", as "pandering to socialism" and as "political bribes offered out of other people's money".

The most recent stage in the development of the Canadian social services is, of course, the wage-related contributory Canada Pension Plan. Undoubtedly, with the impetus of the report of the Royal Commission on Health Services, we will see, in the next few years, a rapid implementation of more medicare programmes. Although they might be carried out under a variety of provincial sponsorships and with certain variations, the vast majority of Canadians will be covered by one sort or another of pre-paid medical insurance in addition to the earlier introduced Hospital Insurance.

With the introduction of a contributory pension plan and a medical insurance programme, the only major gap remaining in our social insurance field will be that of a cash benefits sickness programme. Although there has been little talk of an early introduction of such a measure, even though millions of dollars are lost annually in salaries and wages through illness, I would suspect we'll hear more of this in the near future. A cash benefits sickness plan could eventually be integrated with the Canada Pension Plan, just as disability, survivors' and orphans' benefits are now.

These, then, are some of the major federal or federal/provincial developments in the income maintenance field which have occurred since Confederation. Concurrently there have been developments in the service programmes publicly operated by provincial or municipal governments. Since time forces me to paint with a broad brush, I hope I'm forgiven for not going into more detail here. Because responsibility for welfare remains in the hands of the provinces, it is not surprising that services and administrations vary somewhat from province to province. As a general statement, but one which I think I could defend in more detail, I would say that the social services here in Alberta are as advanced - as enlightened if you will, as any in the country. Particularly since the establishment of the social allowances programme here in 1960, some very remarkable progress has been made. The province of Alberta, for instance, more than any other province, has moved toward a genuine needs approach to public assistance recipients. A "needs" rather than a "means" test approach to social assistance can be of little value unless there is also an enlightened view of what constitutes "need" in our society today. And in this respect Alberta too is a pace-setter in that the provincial department reviews the actual allowances scales every year, which is in contrast to the more haphazard review followed in some other provinces.

In 1960 Mr. Pearson said "the State has the responsibility of providing, by social security legislation, a cushion between the citizen and catastrophe to help him in circumstances where he cannot help himself or support himself". This view is supported by all major political parties today and most citizens. And even a very brief and inadequate review of some of our major public health and welfare programmes indicates that we have indeed moved a long way from the hope expressed by Sir John A. MacDonald that "private charity would soon relieve the governments of all their existing commitments for public welfare".

In addition to a fairly complete network of social services which provide a hedge for man against the hazards of modern society, we have a burgeoning national economy - an economic boom. Just this past year the gross national product in Canada

grew by a fat 8 per cent - the best year of growth since 1956, and 2 per cent more than the most optimistic forecast. Our economic growth is going ahead at a more rapid rate than any country on earth, largely because improved technology is opening our virtually untapped tremendous natural resources. Since 1950 our average per capita personal income has almost doubled from $979 to $1,850. Compare your own income today with that of the year 1950, and you will probably see how these figures are borne out in your own lives. In spite of complaints about our rising cost of living, it has in fact only increased by a fraction of our income growth. Our increased income is real and not just illusionary. Last year Canadians splurged $677 million in travel abroad. Canada now has more cars than households, and Calgary this year replaced Los Angeles as the most car-crowded city in the world.

So far I have attempted to sketch an outline of the development of our national concept of social justice, the growth of our social services, and a word on our economic and social conditions of today. In the few minutes remaining I must tackle the more difficult job of suggesting at least some of the implications of these major developments for the future of your Council.

In the last few minutes it has, perhaps, occurred to some of you that the time may have come when the most responsible decision you, as a local voluntary planning body, could make to this community would be to "close shop" and get out of business. You might argue that after all, in the course of our social history, the responsibility for welfare has moved clearly and inexorably not only from the municipality to larger provincial and federal units, but also from the voluntary to the public sector. It is true that whereas in 1960 60 per cent of all public welfare costs were carried by the municipalities, today they assume only 3 per cent of public welfare expenditures. And the extent of the shift from public to private is reflected in the fact that today governmental health and welfare expenditures amount to some $4 billion annually, as compared to some $40 million, or one per cent, raised by all united appeals in Canada for our 2,000 voluntary health and welfare agencies. Moreover, this trend for responsibility from the smaller community unit to the larger provincial or federal will no doubt continue, as will the trend from private to public.

You may very well, therefore, ask whether there is much of a future role for the non-governmental community planning body. With the fishing and golf season upon us, nothing would please me more than to suggest that you could, with all good conscience, close shop and spend your energies in the pursuit of more relaxing endeavours. Unfortunately, I am convinced a big job remains to be done. I see at least a threefold continuing responsibility for the community welfare council, namely:

1. To improve the effectiveness of individual voluntary agencies and system of community services.
2. To work with public and voluntary bodies for the development of sound public social policies.
3. To deal effectively with new problems arising out of social change.

1. <u>To Improve the Effectiveness of Individual Voluntary Agencies and System of Community Services</u>.

I hardly need remind anyone that this Edmonton Welfare Council began as a council of social agencies. Over the years both function and name have changed several times, and rightly so, in response to changing social conditions. However, one of the chief functions of this Council should continue to be one of improving the effectiveness of individual voluntary agencies and the system of community services. This city is fortunate in having one of the finest united appeal organizations in the country, and the citizens of Edmonton contribute through it well over $1 million annually. Even in our affluent and inflated age this is a lot of money. The citizens of this community have a right to expect that their voluntary contributions will be administered at least as effectively as are their compulsory taxes paid to the public purse. We place high value in our society on private enterprise. But in the long run private enterprise, in this case voluntary agencies, will and should continue to function only as long as they serve a useful purpose. We should be no more starry-eyed about the administration of a voluntary agency than we are of a business or a governmental department. Voluntary health and welfare agencies, like all human institutions, can grow weary and sick, and cease to function effectively. Lack of imagination, persistent financial malnutrition, and above all, dull devotion to tradition, can produce decadence in any agency. A vigorous properly-staffed community welfare council must serve as a diagnostician and physician for those voluntary agencies who become sick. The Council must also contribute to all agencies through leadership, stimulation of new avenues of service, and by providing the educational experience required to maintain performance at a high level. This assistance to agencies is provided through consultative help, co-ordinating mechanisms, community education, and formal studies. It goes without saying that to provide this vital service the Council must have the necessary financial resources.

2. <u>To Work with Public and Voluntary Bodies for the Development of Sound Public Social Policies</u>.

As governments assume larger and larger responsibility for the social services; as society becomes more complex; as the voice of the individual citizen tends to become lost in the chorus of the multitudes, - it becomes, at the same time,

more important and more difficult for a voluntary body like a community council to perform this function. A programme designed to help formulate sound social policies is something quite different from an irresponsible and debunking carping criticism of all existing public social measures and public servants. It is also something much more positive and creative than the role played by the "Loyal Opposition" in our Parliaments. More often than not, a council, in this role, will be the active partner of government and its officials.

On the other hand, if the facts so indicate, the Council will not be muted simply to avoid becoming engaged in the "rough and tumble" of a public controversy on social issues. On any social issue the Council must ask two basic questions: What are the facts?; What do these facts mean? The answer to these questions conveyed by a courageous Board, can supply guidance to public officials, to the press, and to the public at large. To get the facts a Council must have highly competent staff and be supported by an able, even if small, research department. Sentiments of sweet charity are not enough; concern for human need must be backed up with facts systematically obtained and collated.

Two areas in which your Council will undoubtedly be active in the development of social policy statements in the next decade are (1) the whole field of prevention, and (2) "war on poverty". Just as in the past 25 years we have seen a gigantic development of our income maintenance programmes, so in the next 25 years we will make major strides in the prevention field. And my hunch is that the Province of Alberta will be a pace-setter.

Secondly, with the recent decision by the Federal Government to provide a major thrust in a "war on poverty" a la Canadienne, there will be many new opportunities for non-governmental councils, like yours and mine, to assist governments at all levels in developing sound social policies and programmes. From even very preliminary talks with the newly-appointed Federal Poverty Secretariat Director, I am confident the Federal Government at least will welcome aid from bodies like ours in its "war on poverty". Despite the best intentions in planning on the part of government, and in spite of our network of "income maintenance programmes", there are bound to be many unanticipated consequences for poor people both in the lack of programmes and in the final outcome of those programmes that do exist. Councils like ours should therefore direct careful thought to understanding these net consequences, and this new information should be conveyed to the public authorities and hence employed in new and improved public programmes.

As we attempt, through action-oriented social research, to gain a better

understanding of the nature and extent of poverty, local councils can play a key role in obtaining what has been called "slices of reality". National and regional statistics, aggregates, averages, and medians, are limited in what they can tell us about poverty and how to ameliorate it. In addition to these statistics we must find out how people actually live - obtain a slice of reality - and this can only be accomplished by going to where the people live in communities. Just one example: The Dominion Bureau of Statistics tells us that in 1961 over 800,000 Canadians, living alone, had an annual income of less than $1,000. That statistic is useful as far as it goes, but it does not answer the all-important question of how these people live. This information can often best be obtained by organizations like the Edmonton Welfare Council.

3. To Deal Effectively with New Problems Arising out of Social Change.

It is symptomatic of our bullish and optimistic outlook that in our thinking the word "change" has become virtually synonymous with progress. We simply assume that change means change for the better. We assume that technological discovery inevitably and unconditionally leads to social advancement for all; economic progress leads to social progress. To a degree, of course, all of these assumptions are valid. Without technological advances or a healthy economy, our social progress would be thwarted. Our present network of social services has been possible because we have enjoyed a sound national economy. I hardly need remind you that your Council was delayed a full 10 years in starting its work because of the great economic depression of the 1930's.

Technological, economic, and social change - even if they result in overall progress - require adjustment, and bring with them a whole set of attendant problems which need resolving. For example, the current advancement in automation and cybernetics will shortly relieve many people from the sub-human drudgery of the assembly line, where the industrial revolution placed them, and enable them to do more creative work elsewhere. All this is progress. But think of the impact on the lives of the people affected - in some cases early obsolescence of skills acquired, perhaps early retirement, - for others painful re-training, and moving to new jobs and communities. Already one quarter of all Canadian families change their addresses in any one year; - this doesn't include the highly mobile single worker. Technological discovery and progress, and a more rationalized labour policy, will vastly increase this mobility. Technological progress does bring social progress - but also new social problems.

Increased automation will also bring increased leisure time for all, and particularly for the blue-collar worker. But oddly enough, the thought of increased leisure produces more of a shock than a relief to this work-oriented and work-addicted

society of ours. Increased leisure will bring with it potential social problems, ironical as they may be. We will have to develop new services which can aid people in using their leisure time in creative and fulfilling ways, rather than in all forms of dissipation and hanky-panky. Aristotle, in 300 B.C., said "A society that is unprepared for true leisure will degenerate in good times".

As our economic boom continues, so will urbanization. The Economic Council of Canada tells us that the urban centres must absorb, in the next five years alone, 1,500,000 new workers. A guestimate, based on population, suggests that between 30,000 and 35,000 of these young workers will find jobs here in this metro centre. Having come through a decade of a fantastic population increase of close to 100 per cent, you will recognize only too well the task facing you as you must anticipate a continued rapid increase in your population. Social planners and the physical planners will have to work together more closely in order to make certain that good city planning doesn't backfire in terms of human happiness. I believe none of us - social or physical planners - would yet argue unconditionally that the social and economic ghettos we are currently building really make for the best kind of community life. As your city gets bigger; as population mobility increases; as more and more of the population is housed in apartment buildings, the answer to the age-old question "who is my neighbour" will be a frank "I don't know and I couldn't care less". Sweet privacy in good times can turn to bitter loneliness in times of trouble. More services will need to be developed to give that kind of help, often very unsophisticated, which was rendered in a less complex society by friend or neighbour.

Our burgeoning economy is attracting dramatically increasing numbers of married women to the labour force. In Edmonton the percentage of women in the labour force, at 27.3 per cent of the total, is already somewhat higher than the national average. Today almost one quarter of all Canadian married women are in the labour force. This compares to 17 per cent only five years ago. This trend will undoubtedly continue. There is little point in debating the pros and cons of married women in the labour market. Women, including mothers of young children, have become an integral and essential part of our economy, both as producers in the labour force and as consumers. This is an economic fact of life. Obviously it has its economic advantages. But we should now take a hard look at the social implications. Slightly more than half of the working married women are mothers of children 16 years of age or under. To make certain that here in this metro area children of working mothers will receive the care and attention they require in their important and formative years may well be a chief point of concern for you as more and more mothers go to work.

Increased automation, continuing urbanization, a rapidly expanding labour force, - these are but a few of the many changes which, alongside with promise of improved standards of living, are bringing with them a whole set of new social problems. To deal with these problems most effectively at the community level will be one of your on-going functions.

This function will mean a much greater degree of inter-disciplinary collaboration than heretofore. I would agree completely with the thesis that in the next decade or two the greatest bottleneck in the development of our social services will not be lack of money nor technical knowhow. Rather, it will be how to co-ordinate and bring into a harmonious whole the rapidly-growing multitude of specializations being spawned by our advancement in the behavioural and social sciences, and administered in a fragmented way. I would not say you will be the sole co-ordinating agent, but undoubtedly you will be involved in initiating and stimulating the co-ordination and increased collaboration.

Time is up. My final word is a reminder that we consistently keep our thoughts on the object of all our activities - namely "man". In so doing, we will do well to remember Tolstoy's words - through his "Pierre - when he said "it all depends not so much on what we think that man can do as on what we believe man is". We, the so-called "human engineers" of man and society, must remember that man is not an animal to be manipulated, adjusted, conditioned, like Pavlov's dog. But man is a human being, created in the image of God. He is endowed with a reason, a conscience, a will, a power of choice and independent action. Therefore, the society we try to build must be one in which not only the maximum opportunity for all will exist, but one in which man will retain the freedom to exercise his divinely endowed attributes. Originally I had this "watchdog for individual freedom" as a fourth function. On reflection it seemed not so much a function at all as a philosophy which must permeate and guide all of your work over the next 25 years of service.

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May 4, 1965
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