

Summary of proposed policy on Welfare & Senior Citizens

The problem can be stated as follows:

1. Spiralling welfare costs;
2. Wasteful duplication and overlapping of services and agencies;
3. Services are palliative or "band-aid" measures, administered too late and often only when cases reach a hopeless stage;
4. An increasing number of families are trapped in a poverty cycle.

Our recommendations are for the reorganization of the whole welfare system and a program of prevention. In addition, more equitable arrangements must be made to finance the cost of services to people, both to relieve the Vancouver taxpayer from an unreasonable and rapidly increasing burden, and to ensure that services to people are not jeopardised at this time of rapid growth. Below are our broad recommendations in capsule form; for more specific details it is necessary to refer to our report:

- I THE REVIEW AND REORGANIZATION OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN VANCOUVER IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE BEST POSSIBLE VALUE FOR THE WELFARE DOLLAR. We recommend an immediate review of municipal social services particularly City Social Service Dept., with a view to reorganization and amalgamation of related agencies, leading to less costly and more efficient service with rehabilitative help.
- II ESTABLISHMENT OF A MAYOR'S COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES, to review and recommend reorganization or coordination of related services i.e. educational, recreational, social; and also to involve Manpower, business, industry and labour in a co-operative effort to develop training and employment opportunities for the poor.
- III EMPHASIS ON PREVENTION AND GREATER OPPORTUNITIES FOR REHABILITATION. We stress increased training and job opportunities for persons on low income or on welfare and suggest various incentives and community resources including extension of child care services, to permit those who can become self-supporting to do so. Our prevention program is aimed at children growing up to break the poverty cycle.
- IV EXTENSION AND IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICES TO SENIOR CITIZENS. Vancouver's climate is bound to attract retired people, who can become an important economic asset rather than dependent liabilities, if proper services are planned so that they can continue to function independently. Our recommendations include multi-service day centres for senior citizens which will offer a variety of services including counselling, educational and recreational programs, health checks, low-cost lunches, similar to the Silver Threads program in Victoria. It is also most urgent that the number of new chronic care beds and boarding homes be increased to relieve the pressure on acute beds in general hospitals, and we therefore must demand that the B.C. government rescind its ban on private hospital construction.
- V THE COMMENCEMENT OF A CONTINUOUS DIALOGUE WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA TO ENSURE THAT SERVICES TO PEOPLE ARE FINANCED ON AS BROAD A TAX BASE AS POSSIBLE AND ARE NOT JEOPARDISED AT THIS TIME OF RAPID GROWTH. While it is not possible to condense this economic argument efficiently, briefly it is that while the present income tax structure gives senior governments automatically increased revenues as personal incomes rise (e.g. Mr. Bennett disclosed recently he received \$142 million from income tax in 1967 as against \$98 million the previous year), the municipal tax structure, which relies for 75% of its revenue from property taxes, has no such built-in device for increasing revenues. The Economic Council of Canada points out that, with the rapid urbanization of Canada, the expenditure requirements of rapidly growing cities exceed considerably their revenue resources, and therefore considers that services to people should be financed from as broad a tax base as possible and services to property should be financed from municipal taxes. However, Mr. Bennett has recently doubled the municipalities' financial responsibility for welfare! That the per capita grant is now paid at a flat rate rather than on the previous inequitable downward sliding scale is irrelevant; the per capita grant is for other services. Vancouver's welfare bill in 1967 was \$2,353,000, and in 1968 can be expected to be \$4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> million (it is understood the amount budgeted was \$2 million!) Another inequity is that municipalities are billed for social assistance costs on a per capita basis, and not on the basis of the actual costs attributable to the municipality concerned, so that proposals to streamline administration and remedy local economic ills that cause dependency, will not make corresponding savings in our welfare bill. We suggest action through the Union of B.C. Municipalities to insist on a continuing dialogue with the B.C. Govt. to protect both the municipal taxpayer and the quality of service. Incidentally, it is noted that North Vancouver has voted to dump welfare costs on the prov. govt. by 1970.