

1953
JUNE

AN EVALUATION OF WELFARE

in

ALBERTA

Edmonton Council of Community
Services

June 9, 1953

Public welfare - Canadian

42

AN EVALUATION OF WELFARE IN ALBERTA.

Summary of a Statement Made to the Board of Directors of the Edmonton Council of Community Services, June 9, 1953 by E.S. Bishop.

NOTE: This is an attempt to evaluate the over-all welfare picture as it is related to the work of the Edmonton Council of Community Services. It is based on a series of reports presented by members to the Northern Alberta Branch, Canadian Association of Social Workers, during the 1952-53 program year but the conclusions drawn are those of the speaker and do not necessarily represent the considered opinion of the C.A.S.W.

The following fields of service were covered:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Corrections. | 5. Health Services. |
| 2. Recreation. | 6. Mental Health Services. |
| 3. Child Welfare. | 7. Private Welfare Agencies. |
| 4. Adult Welfare. | 8. Veterans' Services. |

CORRECTIONS: Very little progress has been made in modernizing our penal institutions in Alberta. The only significant development of recent years has been the opening of the Bowden Institution to accommodate both juveniles and young offenders. Over-crowding and lack of rehabilitation are the two problems most needing attention in this field and it is felt that some attention should be given this matter by the Council. Leadership is being given by the John Howard Society and the Salvation Army and it is felt that a broader community support might produce more significant results.

RECREATION: One of the major problems now facing recreation is the question of the "soldier on leave". It is felt that the Council of Community Services has a responsibility for giving leadership in coping with the problem how the soldier is to spend his time in our community. This is a problem of concern both to the community and to military leaders. It may be recalled that last summer considerable difficulty was encountered during the "so-called Zoot Suit riots". Some of this might have been forestalled had we had adequate recreation and cultural activities for servicemen.

CHILD WELFARE: There has been much public discussion of this problem in recent years but progress to date has not been too significant. It is felt that the public do not adequately understand the nature of the Child Welfare problem, particularly with regard to the protection of children in their own homes and the provision of adequate case work services to prevent family break-up. There has been virtually no progress in case work services to unmarried parents since Counselling Services to unmarried mothers are still almost entirely lacking.

In addition there should be some real examination of the question of transferring the guardianship of children from parents to the state by the present method known as Consent to Indenture.

= LIBRARY =

EDMONTON WELFARE COUNCIL

2nd FLOOR, 10011-10013 STREET
EDMONTON, ALBERTA

In the placement of children needing care, two problems are quite evident. The first is the need for the co-ordination and straightening out of our institutional services; second is the development of a foster home program, including an expansion of our institutional facilities to care for defective children. These problems are interrelated. The development of a foster home program would reduce the need for institutional facilities. In connection with adoptions, it is felt that the skills of trained adoption workers should be available in Alberta and that workers now carrying adoption work cannot do an adequate job because of heavy case loads.

ADULT WELFARE: It is felt that in Alberta there is a good financial underwriting of our adult welfare program. We have the supplementary assistance program to both Old Age Assistance and Old Age Security. Our Mother's Allowance program is quite adequate financially. Alberta has introduced a Widow's Pension scheme which is unique in any province in Canada. We also have legislation to cover disabled persons. Two new family courts have been set up in Edmonton and Calgary to handle marital problems.

On the other hand services to transients are still inadequate and are administered with the same attitude as was typical in the 1930's. What is missing in our adult program is skilled and adequate case work services to supplement our financial program in such a way as to reduce or prevent the development of social problems resulting in the need for financial assistance. It is felt that more family problems should be assisted with counselling instead of being referred to family court for legal adjudication.

HEALTH SERVICES: At the present time we have a multiplicity of private health programs resulting in over-protection to some members in our community and no protection to others. The co-ordination of our health schemes should be of concern to the Council in its health program and attention should be given particularly to health services for elderly persons. Accommodation in private nursing homes is inadequate in quantity and substandard in quality. The cost of care in nursing homes attached to hospitals is almost prohibitive even for persons of moderate income. Another problem is that many persons not requiring active hospital treatment are left in hospital because they have no place to go on discharge. This suggests that Social Service programs be introduced to our large hospitals. Much assistance could be given elderly people if this were done.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: There appears to be a lack of balance in our mental health program. We are building larger and better mental hospitals. But we also need more preventive work done through clinics located in the communities to bring cases of insipient mental illness to light before they reach a critical stage. For some years now, efforts have been made to create a Mental Health Association which presumably would lead to a better public understanding of mental health problems and the provision of more adequate facilities. The Council of Community Services has a responsibility in developing further resources not only for psychiatric assistance in connection with agencies but for the Community as a whole. It would appear that some liaison with this organization might be advisable.

PRIVATE WELFARE AGENCIES: Private welfare agencies have not played as prominent a part in the development of welfare in Alberta as in other provinces. The Council of Community Services provides an excellent forum through which the average citizen can contribute to the general welfare of the Community and through which agencies participating in the Council can make an orderly division between public and private welfare responsibilities. It is strongly felt that the development of welfare should not be entirely left to people who have a bureaucratic outlook.

In the field of private agency financing it is strongly felt that with an expanding and developing community, Community Chest goals can be increased accordingly.

VETERANS' SERVICES: Since the Veterans' program is somewhat apart from our community, being a program for a special group and is Federally sponsored, efforts should be made to insure that it is integrated into our local community co-ordination and planning.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS: Housing and Community Planning would do much to prevent or eliminate many of the social problems encountered by agencies. Therefore, liaison should be maintained with organizations interested in this field.

Civil Defence This is a broad effort on the part of all citizens of the community to join together to alleviate the effects of disaster. It would appear therefore, that the Council of Community Services has a key role to play in assisting in the planning of welfare services in Civil Defence and also in providing adequate help to member agencies in how to cope with the results of catastrophe.

CONCLUSION: As a forum of professional and lay citizens, the Council of Community Services has a key role to play in the orderly development of welfare in our community. There are many fine and useful functions being carried out by member agencies. There are also notable gaps in our Community Services.