

Canada's Tenth Year of Baby Payments Find Increased Favor

By A. ROBERT SMITH
Mail Tribune Correspondent

Ottawa, Canada — Canada has just marked the 10th anniversary of its family allowance program — the national bonus-for-babies plan that Sen. Richard L. Neuberger (D-Ore.), wants America to adopt — and just about everyone here says it is here to stay. In this last decade, Canada has paid out some \$3,000,000,000 in monthly checks payable to the mothers of this nation's special childhood needs. Each mother gets from \$5 to \$8 per month for each child, according to his age, until the age of 16. During this period of eligibility, from birth to 16, each child gives its mother the right to draw \$1.188 in monthly family allowances.

Senate Study Asked
Sen. Neuberger in the recent session of Congress introduced a resolution, co-sponsored by Sen. Wayne Morse (D-Ore.), and a small group of other Democrats, calling for a Senate study of the ins and outs of Canada's plan. Neuberger hopes eventually it will become as familiar to Americans as social security, but he has said he thinks it may take years to gain acceptance.

That was pretty much how it happened here in Canada. No one person is credited with fathering the plan, but it was espoused devotedly during the 1930s by a French-Canadian Catholic priest, Leon Lebel, who wrote, lectured and testified before committees to drum up support for the family allowance scheme. A decade later his work bore fruit, when several wartime government reports advocated the plan — and finally in 1944 Prime Minister McKenzie King asked parliament to set up the program.

Although there were bitter political outcries against the plan when it was first put forward by the prime minister — the Progressive Conservative party leader called it a political bribe — popular support from Canadians annihilated the opposition with amazing speed. Parliament adopted the bill that same year, and there wasn't one dissenting vote cast.

Plan Not Opposed
The observation that the program is here to stay in Canada is based on the expressed attitudes of the various political elements today toward the plan. None of them oppose it; but they vie instead for public favor with suggestions about improving it, raising the monthly allowance and telling how they were really its first advocates. This is not unlike the social security issue in the U.S., which sees Republicans and Democrats in Congress trying to outdo one another to increase benefits.

Gallup polls taken here show that in 1943, the year before

it was advanced by the government, only 40 per cent of the Canadian population favored the plan. But by 1950, this percentage had jumped to 90.

While Canadians apparently believe with only small dissent that the program here is a success, Canada they say can not claim to have pioneered this idea. When she started it in 1945 officials recall that some 30 other countries had some sort of bonus for big families. They said the United States today is the only major industrial nation which hasn't adopted any such scheme.

What has been the effect of the program on Canada?

Increased Consumption
Neuberger pointed out, when he spoke for the plan in the Senate, that it resulted in greatly increasing consumption of children's shoes and other articles of clothing, milk in poor tenement districts of the cities and canned milk in the far north trading post sectors.

Officials here say this has certainly been the case. And since children become ineligible if they play hookey from school, attendance in Canadian public schools has reached new heights. One woman wrote the director of the program, Byrnes Curry, saying: "Billy wants me to tell you he has his first pair of flannel pajamas. I always made them out of flour sacks before."

Another said, "When Ralphie drank the Flit the cheques paid the hospital bill. I don't know how to thank you."

Under the law, the check is mailed to the mother in her name, on the theory that she is more likely than the father to comply with the law's requirement that the money be spent on something of direct benefit to the child. But Canada has no vast supervisor force to check into the way the money is spent. They simply run down complaints received from neighbors who think the money is being misused, like the man who told authorities the fellow next door used the family allowance to put a new roof on his house. When officials checked and found that the kids slept in the attic and caught cold every time it rained through the leaky roof, they allowed as how the parents had properly used their allowance.

Another result of the program, of course, is a redistribution of wealth from the richer to the poorer regions of this vast country. Every mother receives the allowance, rich or poor, but it is the higher salaried Canadians that pay the brunt of its \$30,000,000 yearly cost through income taxation. Surveys have shown that the poorer families tend to use the allowance for basic necessities, such as food, clothing and medical bills, while the middle and high income

groups tend to use the money for extra benefits, such as music lessons or college educations.

Recalling that some totalitarian countries have used baby payments as a means of encouraging a higher birth rate, one asks how has the plan affected Canada's birth rate. The answer seems to be very little, if any at all. The wartime surge in births hit Canada as it did the U.S. It hit a high of 28.6 births per thousand in 1947, but has dropped steadily to 27 last year. Also, when the plan was started in 1945 the Canadian family averaged 2.37 children, and now it is slightly less.

There are, of course, some

Pittsburgh Realtor Conference Speaker

Robert W. Semenow, Pittsburgh, Penn., will be one of the principal speakers at the Jackson-Josephine realtors' educational conference Sept. 12 in the Medford hotel.

Semenow is on the faculty of the University of Pittsburgh as a professor of real estate law and is an honorary life member of the Pittsburgh Real Estate board. His various positions and honors include secretary treasurer, National Association of License Law Officials since 1930; former Director of the Pennsylvania Real Estate Brokers' License Law; principal legal assistant to the Workmen's Compensation board since 1939; secretary counselor of the License Law Committee of the National Association of Real Estate boards.

The realtor is author of three books, "Survey of Real Estate Brokerage License Laws," "Pennsylvania Law of Real Estate Brokerage, Landlord and Tenant," and "Questions and Answers on Real Estate." During the Medford conference he will appear at the afternoon session, speaking on employment and sales controls.

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Ernest L. Scott
Named to Committee
Ernest L. Scott, secretary of Medford Elks lodge, has been named representative of the Oregon State Elks association Visually Handicapped Children's committee in this area. Scott will supply information on services provided by the Children's Eye clinic at the University of Oregon medical school at Portland. The clinic was founded six years ago under Elks leadership to help youngsters of needy parents. The state association annually contributes \$70,000 to its support.

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