

number of other specialized fields, the Federal Government slowly began to acquire a certain familiarity with the nature of the problems involved, although there was little thought at the time, either in the minds of governments or on the part of the public generally, that the federal authority had any proper responsibility in this field.

The year 1919 is significant since it marks the establishment of a Federal Department of Health, whose functions included quarantine and immigration medical services, narcotic control, food and drug standards, child welfare, housing and the supervision of a venereal disease control grant. Beginning with the year ended Mar. 31, 1920, with the exception of a few years in the 1930's, money from this grant was available to assist the provinces in the establishment and operation of a series of venereal disease clinics. In 1928, the Departments of Health and Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment were merged.

Not until 1927, however, did the Federal Government enter into a commitment in the field of public welfare which could be regarded as continuous or permanent. Here again, the pattern that had manifested itself with regard to the voluntary and municipal agencies in the first instance, and later with the municipal and provincial governments, repeated itself in the area of provincial-federal relationships.

Recognizing that the costs of providing old age pensions on a means-test basis for persons 70 years of age or over were too great to be borne by the provincial governments alone, the Federal Government passed the Old Age Pensions Act in 1927 authorizing federal tax funds to be made available to reimburse provincial governments for 50 p.c. of the costs of old age pensions paid in conformity with standards laid down in federal legislation. In taking this step, the federal authority entered the field of public welfare and social security legislation for the first time on a continuing basis. Just as the year 1914 marked an important point of transition in the shift of the burden of administrative and financial responsibility for public social services from the municipal to the provincial level, so the year 1927 was significant as the beginning of a new phase in which, slowly at first but in later years with gathering momentum, the financial and administrative responsibility for public social services shifted from provincial governments to the Federal Government.

For a decade or more following the first significant step in 1927 the trend was slow to develop. The position taken by the Federal Government was that public welfare services, under the constitution, were the exclusive responsibility of the provinces and that, while federal financial assistance might be made available to help in carrying the burden, the basic financial and administrative responsibility rested with the provinces. It was on this basis that the old age pension plan of 1927 was conceived and carried out. It was likewise on this basis that the unemployment relief program during the depression years was undertaken, with all three levels of government sharing in the financial responsibility, but with most of the administrative responsibility resting on the provincial and local authorities.

During these years the provincial governments began to protest the thesis that responsibility for large-scale social services should be carried by the provincial authorities. They pointed out that problems of such magnitude could be dealt with satisfactorily only by that governmental jurisdiction which had the broadest and most extensive taxing powers, namely, the Federal Government. Strong pressures developed on the provincial and municipal levels to have the Federal Government take over responsibility for unemployment relief. This trend, running counter to the normal provincial concern regarding federal encroachment in provincial