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SOCIAL SERVICES

*AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST
THE ECONOMIC CRISIS*

2nd Edition

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Social Services

and the struggle against
the Economic Crisis

2nd Edition—Revised and slightly enlarged

Prepared by the
AUSTRALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

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FOREWORD

SOCIAL service legislation enacted by the Federal Labour Government has substantially increased the number of people eligible to receive pensions and benefits. There are, however, some people in the community who do not understand the operation of these laws and how to go about securing benefits to which they are entitled.

With the developing economic crisis and the fact that the living standards of the Australian people are already on the decline, in addition to reduced prices and increased wages, social services will be of even greater importance in the lives of many people.

This booklet, which has been compiled from information published by the Department of Social Services, and collected from Federal and State Departments and a study of the various Acts of Parliament, is a condensed but comprehensive survey of most Social Services provided by the Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments, and is made available so that members of the Communist Party may increase their help and service to the community. Most of these benefits have been won by persistent struggles by the working class over a period of years, and whilst many anomalies still exist, these will only be adjusted and improved living standards achieved when the people themselves unitedly struggle for them.

The Australian Communist Party is concerned with the welfare of all sections of the toiling people, and, as always, is prepared to fight for the proper administration of gains already won, whilst leading and organising the masses for a better way of life in which poverty and exploitation have no part.

Commonwealth Social Services

SOCIAL SERVICES ACT

The Social Services Act, which is administered by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, makes provision for the following pensions and benefits :

- Age Pensions;
- Invalid Pensions;
- Widows' Pensions;
- Maternity Allowance;
- Child Endowment;
- Unemployment and Sickness Benefit;
- Special Benefit.

PENSIONS

The maximum pension, payable to any type of pensioner, is £1/17/6 a week, which may be received by a person who earns or has other income of £1 a week; who owns a home in which he lives (with furniture and personal effects); and who has money or other property not exceeding net value of £59.

A claimant for pension or a pensioner may have property up to a value of £650, but the pension is progressively reduced with each complete £10 of such value in excess of £50.

The income and property of husband and wife are added together even if only one is a pensioner, and **half** their joint income and property is regarded as the income and property of each. This, however, does not apply to people who are divorced or legally separated.

A man and his wife, both pensioners, could have an income of £5/10/- a week between them and each receive a pension of 2/6 a week.

Gifts or allowances from parents or children are not regarded as income.

AGE PENSION: To qualify for an age pension a man must have reached the age of 65 years and a woman 60 years, and must have resided continuously in Australia for twenty years. Occasional absences are not regarded as having broken continuity of residence. A claimant must be of good character and must not have deserted a spouse or dependent children (i.e., children under sixteen) during the six months preceding a claim, or have deliberately deprived himself of property or income in order to secure a pension.

Aliens are not eligible for pension.

Subject to the Means Test previously mentioned, the rate of age pension is £1/17/6 a week.

A person who enters a Benevolent Asylum receives 13/6 a week of his pension, the remainder being paid to the Asylum for his maintenance.

INVALID PENSION: A person over the age of sixteen who has resided in Australia for at least five years and who has become permanently incapacitated for work, or blind, while in Australia is eligible to qualify for an invalid pension.

A pension is not granted to a person under 21 who can be adequately maintained by his parents. The Department assesses capacity for maintenance at £2/10/- a week for every person in the family over 16 and 25/- for each child under sixteen.

A claimant for invalid pension must be certified by a doctor as at least 85% incapacitated for work and may therefore not earn more than 12/6 a week.

Wife's Allowance: A maximum allowance of £1 a week is payable to the wife or de facto wife of an invalid pensioner (or age pensioner permanently incapacitated). The rate of allowance is affected by income or property (as above) and the wife must not be in receipt of any pension. She is also entitled to an allowance of 5/- a week for a child in her care, custody and control. Provided she is not less than 50 years old, these allowances are continued if her pensioner husband enters a Benevolent Asylum.

A blind person and his wife may have an income of £5/7/6 a week and the claimant still receive maximum pension of £1/17/6 a week. If both are blind they may

have an income of £5/7/6 a week and each receive maximum pension.

Vocational Training: Provision is made for Vocational training for invalid pensioners, and claimants or pensioners may be directed by the Director General to undertake such training.

Funeral Benefit: A Funeral benefit of £10 is payable for the funeral of all age and invalid pensioners.

WIDOWS' PENSIONS: Widows' pensions are granted to widows, de facto wives (i.e., women who have lived with a man on a permanent domestic basis for at least three years preceding his death), deserted wives, wives of husbands in mental asylums or in prison, and divorced wives not maintained by their husbands.

For purposes of the Act widows are divided in A, B, C and D classes.

An A CLASS widow is a widow or 'dependent female' with one or more children under sixteen; she receives a pension of £1/17/6 plus 5/- for her first child, the other children being provided for by Child Endowment.

A B CLASS widow is a widow with no dependent children who is not less than fifty years old. Maximum pension is £1/12/- a week.

CLASS C covers widows without dependent children who are less than fifty years old. The pension is £1/17/6 a week but is only payable for a period of six months.

A D CLASS widow is a woman whose husband has been imprisoned for at least six months who has dependent children or is not less than fifty years old. In cases of extreme hardship the Director General has discretion to grant relief during the first six months of a husband's imprisonment.

To qualify for a pension in any of the above classes a woman must have been dependent on her husband before his death. The Means Test is the same as for invalid and Age pensions, but in assessing income, an allowance of £13 a year is made for each dependent child.

In the case of a deserted or divorced wife who has not remarried all payments in excess of £39 a year from a former husband are regarded as income.

A claim for a widow's pension should be lodged within three months of the death of a husband or de facto husband (or birth of a child which makes a woman an A CLASS widow). If this is done the pension is payable from the date of death (or birth). Otherwise the pension commences from the date on which the claim was lodged.

WAR WIDOWS: Provision for pensions for War Widows is made under the Repatriation Act. The pension is £2/15/- a week with an allowance of 17/6 for the first child and 12/6 a week for all other dependent children. The pension is **not** subject to Means Test.

How to Apply for Pensions: A claimant for a pension is required to fill in a form, available at a Post Office or at the Department of Social Services. All questions should be answered clearly and fully.

In all mass campaigns and canvasses efforts should be made to contact old age, invalid, widow and war widow pensioners, with the object of assisting them to overcome anomalies or to make application for a pension.

Party Policy: 1. An increase of £1 per week for all pensioners to offset the increase in prices and the high cost of living.

2. Relaxation of the Means Test to enable all salary and wage earners to receive the Age pension on retirement, in addition to superannuation or any other allowance to which they have contributed, and irrespective of any property they may have acquired.

MATERNITY ALLOWANCE

A maternity allowance is payable, without Means Test, to every woman resident of Australia who gives birth to a child in Australia or on a ship coming to Australia. The child must be born alive and live for twelve hours, or must be certified as having had an intra-uterine life of at least five and a half calendar months.

An alien or wife of an alien must have twelve months' residence in Australia, but if a birth occurs before the expiry of the twelve months period, maternity allowance may be claimed if the claimant satisfies the Director General that she will remain permanently in Australia.

The allowance is: £15 where there are no other children under sixteen in the family; £16 where there are one or two other children and £17/10/- where there are three or more other children.

Where more than one child is born at a birth the allowance is increased by £5 for each additional child.

How to Apply for Maternity Allowance: Application forms for Maternity Allowance are obtainable at a maternity hospital or at the office of the Registrar of Births. The claim should not be completed until twelve hours after a birth, but must be sent to the Deputy Commissioner for Maternity Allowance in the capital city in which the birth occurred, within three months after the birth. A certificate of registration of the birth (which is supplied free by the Registrar) must accompany the claim.

Payment of £5 on account may be made on application, within four weeks of an expected birth, the balance being paid immediately after the birth on lodgment of claim.

Formalities connected with securing Maternity Allowance are usually attended to by doctor or nurse at the time of birth, but it would be advisable for all migrants to be made aware of the position.

CHILD ENDOWMENT

Any person born in Australia, or who has resided in Australia for the twelve months preceding a claim, is eligible to claim child endowment of 7/6 a week for each child in excess of one under the age of sixteen of whom he or she has the care, custody and control.

Endowment is not paid for a child not born in Australia unless the child has resided in Australia for twelve months preceding a claim, but this condition of twelve months' residence may be waived by the Director General if he is satisfied that the child is likely to remain in Australia.

Endowment is paid to the person who has the actual care, custody and control of the child—usually the wife.

Application forms for Child Endowment are obtainable at a Post Office and must be filled in and sent to the Deputy Commissioner for Child Endowment in the capital city where the claimant resides.

Provided that a claim is lodged within three months after the claimant becomes eligible to claim the endowment, the payment is made from the commencement of the next endowment period after the claimant became eligible.

Here again, most citizens are aware of their rights, but it is important for newcomers to Australia to be made aware of the circumstances under which their children are endowable.

Party Policy: Child Endowment was introduced by the Commonwealth in 1940 as an alternative to a substantial increase in the basic wage. The Communist Party believes that Child Endowment should be in addition to and not used as a means of reducing the basic wage.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND SICKNESS BENEFIT

Unemployment and sickness benefits are granted to persons between the age of sixteen and sixty-five years (women sixteen and sixty), to tide over periods of unemployment or sickness. To qualify for benefit a claimant must have resided in the Commonwealth for at least twelve months immediately prior to the claim, or must satisfy the Director that he is likely to remain in Australia.

Sickness Benefit: A claimant for Sickness Benefit must be temporarily incapacitated for work as a result of sickness or accident, and must show loss of income as a result of the incapacity. A married woman is not eligible for benefit if her husband is able to maintain her.

Unemployment Benefit: A claimant for Unemployment Benefit must be unemployed and willing to accept appropriate work and must have taken reasonable steps to secure employment. A striker is not entitled to benefit, but a worker is not disqualified if his unemployment is due to the strike action of other workers, or if he refuses to do the work of other persons on strike.

A Means Test is applied to the claimant's income but not to his property. For unemployment benefit the income of a claimant and spouse are taken together, so that, if both work and one becomes unemployed, the earnings of the other are taken into account. In the case of sickness benefit the income of the claimant only is taken into account.

The rate of Sickness and Unemployed Benefit is :

Man, wife and child	50/-	allowed income	20/-
Man and wife	45/-	" "	20/-
Single person 21 & over	25/-	" "	20/-
" " 18 & under 21	20/-	" "	15/-
" " 17 & under 18	15/-	" "	10/-
" " 16 & under 17	15/-	" "	5/-

An allowance of £1 a week may be claimed for a dependent housekeeper who is not an employee, and an allowance of 5/- a week to a single person who has the care, custody and control of a child under 16.

A person who has contributed to a Friendly Society or a Lodge may receive £2 a week from the Society, or receive £1 a week from the Society and have other income of £1 a week, and still receive maximum benefit.

The benefit is not paid for the first week of unemployment or incapacity, but a claim must be lodged immediately as no payment is made until seven days after lodgment of the claim.

How To Obtain Benefits: A claimant must fill in a form which is obtainable from a Post Office, and lodge it with the Registrar or District Agent of the Deputy Commissioner for Pensions in the State in which he resides. A certificate from a legally-qualified medical practitioner must accompany a claim for sickness benefit.

Immediately a person becomes unemployed he should register with the nearest Commonwealth Employment Agency.

Workers who become unemployed or sick, or who are working in an industry likely to be affected by a strike of other workers, should consult their Trades Unions imme-

diately. Most Unions have forms available and help their members to apply for a benefit.

A person on Worker's Compensation is not eligible for sickness or unemployment benefit, unless the amount of compensation he is receiving is less than the amount of sickness or unemployment benefit he would be otherwise entitled to receive.

No person may receive at the same time unemployment or sickness benefit and an invalid, age, or service pension.

Note

In view of the approaching economic crisis, the provision of unemployment benefits will be of great importance to the working class, and it should be noted that methods of making application for workers who become unemployed by lockouts or strikes, other than actual participants in the strike, are matters on which the Trade Unions give correct advice and leadership.

The Prime Minister, however, has held that benefit will not be paid to members of a union while other members of that union are on strike with the endorsement of the union. This decision should be the subject of vigorous protest from all Trade Unionists.

SPECIAL BENEFITS

Persons who for various reasons are not eligible to receive any of the pensions or benefits above mentioned, may be granted special benefit if the Director-General considers that by reason of age, physical disability or domestic circumstances, or for any other reason they are in need of such assistance.

The rate of special benefit is the rate of sickness or unemployment benefit the person would receive if qualified to receive it, and is payable from such date and for such period as the Director-General may decide.

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

The making of a false statement in connection with a claim for pension or benefit is regarded as an offence and is punishable by a fine of £50 or imprisonment for six months.

At the very least discovery of false statements is likely to lead to suspension or cancellation of the pension.

Any amount of pension, allowable or benefit which has accrued and is unpaid at the death of a beneficiary shall be paid to the person best entitled to receive the money, provided application is made within six months from the date of death.

HOSPITAL BENEFITS ACT

Under the Hospital Benefits Act "qualified" patients in public hospitals or approved private hospitals are entitled to hospital benefit.

By "Qualified" patient is meant a person ordinarily resident in Australia who is occupying a bed in hospital for purposes of undergoing hospital treatment—provided that person is not entitled to have his or her expenses paid under any law in force at the time, e.g., Workers' Compensation, Motor Car accident cases.

Public Hospitals: The position now is that the Means Test has been abolished and no charge is made for public patients occupying beds in public wards.

A qualified patient occupying a bed in an intermediate or private ward is entitled to a reduction of 6/- per day in fees charged. This advantage has been almost nullified by the recent action of the Hospital Commission in asking all subsidised public hospitals to increase their charges to intermediate and private patients by more than 100% as from the 1st January, 1948, and has resulted in an even greater overcrowding of public wards.

Private Hospitals: The scheme applies to qualified persons receiving hospital treatment in such private hospitals as have applied for registration and have been approved.

"Hospital treatment" is defined as "accommodation or nursing care for the purpose of medical, surgical or obstetric treatment by or under the supervision of a legally-qualified medical practitioner or registered obstetric nurse." It does not cover a rest in hospital where treatment and nursing care are not necessary.

In private hospitals benefit is payable for a period not exceeding eight weeks, unless a doctor certifies that an extra period is necessary.

No hospital benefits are paid in cash, the hospital being required to reduce its charges by 6/- a day—the day of admission and discharge being counted as one day.

The Act states that hospitals shall not increase their charges beyond those obtaining on the 1st September, 1945, without Government permission, but, as in the case of public hospitals, permission has been given on the ground of increased costs, and there has been a sharp rise in fees.

Obstetric Cases: An obstetric patient is entitled to benefit for seventeen days—i.e., two days before the onset of labour and fifteen days after the birth of the child. Benefit will apply for longer period only where a doctor certifies that such longer period is necessary because of some complication or abnormality or disease.

The amount of benefit is 6/- per day for mother and child and 6/- per day for each additional child. Hospitals are not allowed to increase their charges where twins or triplets are born, and the full amount of additional benefit must be applied in reduction of the mother's account.

Hospital benefit is not affected by any payment received from a Hospital Fund or Insurance Policy to which the patient has contributed.

Benefit is not payable in cases where hospital fees are paid under Workers' Compensation, Third Party Insurance, etc. Where there is delay in establishing liability for an accident, the patient is not regarded as a qualified patient. If later it is found that he was not entitled to receive hospital fees, a special claim for hospital benefit should be submitted.

TREATMENT OF OUTPATIENTS: Out-patients are not covered by the Hospital Benefits Act, and a vigorous campaign should be launched in the localities, and in co-operation with the Trade Unions for improved facilities and treatment.

Patients are charged for all visits and it is notorious that days are wasted in interminable waiting. Workers cannot afford to take off all the time involved in treatment at a public hospital and find it cheaper to consult a private doctor. This often means heavy bills for X-Rays, tests, or visits to specialists, and lower-paid workers, especially women, allow their health to deteriorate because they cannot afford to pay for treatment.

Doctors who realise the unsatisfactory conditions surrounding treatment of out-patients say that waiting time could be almost eliminated by introduction of an appointments system. This has been introduced in Victoria, West Australia and some London hospitals with marked success, but Sydney Hospitals have so far refused to consider it.

- Party Policy:**
1. Introduction of an appointments system for out-patients at public hospitals with abolition of charges;
 2. Attendance of a doctor at stated intervals at factories and work-places;
 3. Implementation of the Federal scheme for free medical attention;
 4. To campaign against abnormal increases in fees charged to intermediate and private patients.

PAYMENTS TO PERSONS SUFFERING FROM TUBERCULOSIS

Under the Tuberculosis Act the Commonwealth Government provides the funds from which State Governments make payments to sufferers from tuberculosis and their dependants. The Act was passed with the object of curtailing spread of the disease and of encouraging sufferers to refrain from working and to seek treatment, but its purpose is defeated by the meagre allowances which do not even ensure a family income equal to the basic wage, and by lack of hospital accommodation.

The two Government clinics at Randwick and Waterfall have between them 700 beds, half of which are not occupied because of lack of staff. It is estimated that there are

approximately 8,000 persons in New South Wales alone known to be suffering from tuberculosis for whom no accommodation is available, and that mass radiography would disclose a further 10,000 — 18,000 in one state alone with little hope of recovery because of lack of facilities for treatment, daily spreading the disease in the community!

Subject to Means Test, a person suffering from tuberculosis is eligible for Commonwealth Invalid Pension. A married man may also receive a grant from the State Child Welfare Department for dependent children, and the amount of tuberculosis grant he receives is then assessed on the family income. Maximum payments are :

Single person 10/- with a ceiling income of £2/17/6
—married couple £1/5/- with ceiling of £4/17/6. The allowance is increased by 5/- per week and the ceiling by 10/- per week for each child in the family under 16.

Party Policy :

1. Compulsory mass radiography.
2. Erection and staffing of modern sanatoria for the segregation of sufferers from tuberculosis;
3. Improvements in sanatoria already existing, with increased wages and better working conditions for nurses and staff;
4. To campaign to direct public attention to the appalling conditions existing and to the threat to public health by unchecked spread of the disease;
5. Support of the Citizens' T.B. League and similar organisation;
6. Increased allowances for all sufferers from tuberculosis and a guaranteed minimum of £6 per week for all families dependent on such sufferers.

PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Act provides for supply of free medicines within a prescribed range of drugs. The Formulary is extensive and includes all drugs commonly used in modern medical practice, e.g., all the glandular

products, vitamin preparations, sulphamylamides, anti-sera, penicillin and sulpha drugs. When the Act comes into force a doctor's prescription (which may if the doctor so orders be repeated once or twice) will be made up free by any chemist without charge.

Opposition of the B.M.A. is allegedly based on the ground that use of the Formulary will divide patients into those who could or could not afford to pay for drugs outside the Formulary, and will restrict the doctor in his choice of drugs.

Examination shows these arguments to be false and without merit. The first ignores the fact that a distinction already exists, in an even greater degree, between those who can and cannot afford to pay for expensive drugs. Apart from the restrictions imposed by the financial position of a patient, most doctors work to a Formulary, usually the one of the Hospital where they were trained. Most Hospitals have a Formulary which is rarely departed from. The Army Services also used a Formulary. Doctors who prescribe Proprietary Drugs (which are not included in the scheme) are not using their basic pharmaceutical training.

These false arguments of the B.M.A. should be widely exposed. Free medicine will be of great benefit to the public, but health services will not be adequate until the Drug Industry is nationalised and a completely free medical service brought into operation.

SERVICES CANTEN TRUST FUND

This Fund has been established for the benefit of ex-service men and women from the 1939-46 war and their dependants. The Fund which is based on profits from service Canteens and to which have been added the funds from a number of small sources (e.g., regimental funds, etc.) is administered on a federal level by a Board of Trustees and in each state by a Regional Committee. Each Regional Committee has two sections, concerned with welfare and education, the two purposes which the fund must serve.

Welfare benefits will normally take the form of relief to individual ex-service men or women or their dependants in circumstances of urgent necessity. Applications may be forwarded through ex-service organisations or made direct to the Regional Committee.

Education benefits will be for the children of eligible service men and women and will normally follow the same lines as those available through the Repatriation education scheme, except that eligibility for assistance is wider.

ASSISTANCE FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Assistance is given to selected full-time students undertaking one of a number of specified courses at a University or Technical College.

A claim for assistance is subject to Means Test and Merit Test. The Merit Test applied is the pass obtained in Leaving Certificate or Matriculation Examination, and the Means Test is based on the adjustable Family income.

Applications should be lodged with the Registrar of the University or Universities Commission in the State where the applicant lives, on a printed form "Application for Financial Assistance" obtainable from the University or the Universities Commission.

N.S.W. — State Benefits and Social Services

A number of State benefits are available in New South Wales, many of them supplementary to Commonwealth assistance. These benefits are designed to help indigent persons or families — usually regarded by the authorities as those with an income of less than the basic wage.

Benefits are administered mainly by the Department of Labour and Social Services, Department of Child Welfare and Department of Public Health.

CHILD WELFARE DEPARTMENT

Included in the Child Welfare Act are provisions for the adoption of children, for care of neglected and delinquent children, and for payment of grants for children of families in necessitous circumstances, including the children of unmarried mothers.

These grants are 5/- for the first child and 10/- for each additional child under school leaving age (15 years). A weakness is that no provision is made for a child between the age of 15 and 16 years, but the allowance is sometimes continued for a year where a child is delicate or has unusual scholastic ability. In other cases a child falls back on Food Relief.

Child Welfare grants are in addition to Child Endowment payments and allowances made under Federal legislation.

Adoptions are arranged free of charge, and adopting parents saved the legal fees of fifteen guineas.

Unmarried mothers are assisted in obtaining a maintenance order against the father of the child.

Orphaned and destitute children may be surrendered to state control and boarded out with relatives or other suitable persons. The relatives are paid 10/- per week for the maintenance of each child, plus free dental and medical

care, and school requisites. Persons who are not relatives are paid higher rates, depending on the age of the child. Foster-parents may also claim Child Endowment for children in their care.

Advice on behaviour problems in children is given to parents and, if necessary, an appointment made at one of the Child Guidance clinics.

Offices of the Department are situated at the Education Building, Bridge Street, Sydney, in Newtown, Burwood, Kogarah, Bankstown, Crows Nest, Parramatta, Newcastle and large country towns.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The benefits mentioned hereunder are made available to persons in necessitous circumstances, including pensioners. Applicants are required to fill in a form obtainable at the nearest local office of the Department or, in the country, at the local Police Station.

Metropolitan offices are situated at: Head Office (covering Sydney and Northern suburbs), 132 George Street North; Newtown; Burwood; Auburn; Hurstville; Kingsford; Balmain; Parramatta.

Food Relief or Cash Benefit: Is granted to destitute persons who do not qualify for assistance under the Commonwealth Social Services Act, or pending payment of Commonwealth assistance. The amount of benefit is the same as is provided by Commonwealth Unemployment or Sickness Benefit, and is subject to substantially the same Means Test.

A feature of this assistance is that all claims are investigated promptly and money or food made available immediately eligibility is confirmed.

Additional Milk to the value of one pint per day per person is given to expectant mothers or mothers of children under one year, and to all children under seven years in families receiving cash benefit.

Special Foods are made available to mothers before and after birth of a child, or to persons suffering from certain

types of sickness, e.g., diabetes, malnutrition, T.B. Food orders are issued by Baby Health Centres (where infants are concerned), or in other cases by Officers of the Department or country police.

Medical Assistance and Free Medicine are made available by the Department, which also provides free transport for those obliged to travel for hospital treatment and, in some cases, for close relatives to enable them to visit a patient in hospital.

Surgical Aids: Pensioners and poor persons are provided with free spectacles, and with a wide range of surgical aids recommended by a medical practitioner. The Department arranges for ambulance, where necessary, or other transport for those obliged to travel for medical examination or fittings.

Clothing, etc.: The Department supplies two full issues a year of clothing and footwear; blankets; baby outfits for expectant mothers.

Special Assistance: Special grants ranging from 10/- to 35/- are made in special circumstances to tide over an emergency, such as coming out of hospital or prison, temporary unemployment or sickness. Help is also given where a family is rendered destitute through flood, fire or bereavement or is evicted. In cases of threatened eviction the Department gives help and advice, both in Court proceedings and in helping to secure accommodation.

Hostel for Women and Children: Hostels for temporary accommodation of homeless women and children have been established or subsidised by the Department.

Travelling Dental Clinic: Specially equipped railway carriages travel throughout N.S.W. to provide dental treatment for country people in necessitous circumstances. The service, however, is not as yet very adequate and in many cases applicants have to wait a long time before receiving attention.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH.

Pre-Natal Clinics: In addition to Baby Health Centres the Division of Maternal and Baby Welfare has set up a number of pre-natal clinics, mostly in outlying suburbs. An expectant mother who has booked in at a public hospital may attend one of these clinics and so is saved the fatigue of travel during pregnancy.

Venereal Disease: Treatment of Venereal Disease is free. Sufferers are strongly recommended to attend the clinic at the Health Department in Macquarie Street (for men) and the Rachel Forster Hospital (for women).

Free Dentures: Application for free dentures may be made by pensioners and other poor persons to the Dental Hospitals in Sydney and Newcastle and at all base and district hospitals in Sydney.

Council for Care of the Physically Handicapped: This Council was set up after the last serious epidemic of Infantile Paralysis in N.S.W. Its function is to provide sustenance and vocational training for sufferers from infantile paralysis and some other crippling conditions, and some spastics. Assistance is subject to Means Test, but a less stringent Means Test than is usually applied. The Council's operations are mainly confined to the Metropolitan area.

OLD PEOPLES HOMES: It is a disgrace to our community that old and infirm people should be condemned to spend the last years of their lives in such institutions as Newington, Liverpool and Lidcombe. Complete overhaul of these institutions and provision of a number of smaller homes scattered throughout the Metropolitan area and the countryside are long overdue. There is a crying need for homes without an institutional flavour, of the cottage type, where the cruel separation of husbands and wives would be ended, and where aged people would have their own rooms and adequate comfort and recreational facilities. It is the duty of every Party Branch and every Party member to work to achieve these urgent reforms.

Powers of the Health Department: It should be kept in mind that the Health Department has supervisory control over Municipal Councils in matters of public health, including noxious trades in residential areas. Where a local Council refuses to take action on such matters the Department should be asked to intervene and agitation should be continued until the Department has acted.

CARE OF THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

Care of the pre-school child is a most important issue, affecting as it does the lives of all mothers and young children, and offers a fruitful field of work to Party Branches.

The Minister for Education has made statements admitting the need for a great number of nursery schools and kindergartens, particularly in crowded industrial suburbs, but points out that a full complement cannot be provided because of the cost involved. It is therefore obvious that although this matter is primarily the responsibility of the Government, local Committees should take the initiative for establishment of child-care centres in their own districts.

The Government is beginning to assume some responsibility in this direction and has set up and maintains six nursery schools as well as a training college for teachers at Blackfriars. It also heavily subsidises the Kindergarten Union and the Day Nursery Association.

Through the work of these bodies a standard has been set up, and it is important that all Centres established as the result of local effort should conform to these standards.

According to the needs of the locality a Committee should work to establish:

(1) A Day Nursery (or creche) which cares for the child from birth to the age of two years and provides an 8-hour service on five days a week. This is particularly important in industrial suburbs to care for the children of working mothers.

(2) A Nursery School which caters for children from two to six years of age five days a week for eight hours each day.

(3) A Kindergarten which caters for children from three to five years of age during school hours and school terms;

(4) Extension of facilities at all State schools to cater for children from two years of age.

Day nurseries and Nursery Schools are sometimes run together in one building, the children being divided into age groups and kept with their groups during the day.

It is important for those starting a Nursery School or Kindergarten to be aware that the Department of Labour and Social Services provides free milk for the children. Any such establishments not run for profit should apply to the Department to be included in the scheme.

HOW TO SET ABOUT ESTABLISHING A CHILD-CARE CENTRE.

1st Step: Canvas the area, to establish the need and decide on the type of centre most urgently needed. The ages of all children of pre-school age should be ascertained.

2nd Step: Call a public meeting and set up a Committee. Invite the local member, aldermen, organisations, and a representative from the Kindergarten Union and/or the Day Nursery Association.

3rd Step. Collect information on what will be needed—

- (1) land
- (2) building
- (3) equipment
- (4) teacher.

4th Step: Organise a deputation to the Council asking for land and financial assistance. (The Council is authorised to render this assistance under the Local Government Act.)

5th Step: Apply to the Kindergarten Union or Day Nursery Association for advisory and financial assistance.

6th Step: Raise money—street stalls, fairs, etc.

Try to get something going — do not be put off and allow local activity to lapse because of Council's statements that they have blue prints for Community Centres. Some of the blue prints have been in existence for years and nothing has been done to implement them.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION.

The N.S.W. Workers' Compensation Act provides that workers who receive an injury while at work, or on their way to and from their homes and their place of work or technical or trade school they are required to attend, or who contract any disease as a result of their occupation, shall receive compensation from their employer.

Compensation is not payable if the injury is caused through a worker's own conduct whilst travelling (e.g., breaking traffic laws; getting off a bus or tram on the wrong side), or if the injury occurs during or after a break or substantial deviation in his journey not connected with his work or attendance at a technical school.

Compensation is not payable for an injury which results in disablement for less than three days, or for an injury proved to be solely attributable to a worker's serious and wilful misconduct, unless the injury results in death or permanent disablement.

Amount of Compensation: A worker entitled to compensation receives a weekly payment based on two-thirds of his average weekly earnings for the preceding 12 months, but the amount shall not exceed £3/10/- per week or be less than £2 per week for an adult male.

If he has dependants an additional weekly payment is made of 25/- for a wife or dependent female, and of 10/- for each dependent child under 15. This allowance may also be claimed by a wife who normally works but gives up her work to look after an injured husband. The total

weekly payments shall not exceed a worker's average earnings or £6 a week, whichever is the less.

In addition to weekly payments an injured or sick worker is entitled to have medical and hospital expenses paid up to a maximum of £25 in each case.

Where an injury results in loss of a limb or part of a limb, or of eyesight, the worker may elect to accept a lump sum instead of weekly payments. A fixed schedule of payments for specific injuries has been established. If a lump sum is accepted the weekly payments already received in respect of the injury are deducted when final settlement is made, but not exceeding half the lump sum.

If an injury results in death a sum equal to the worker's earnings for the four preceding years, or £400, whichever is the larger but not exceeding £800 is payable to the dependants of the worker. In addition £25 is payable for each of his dependent children. If he leaves no dependants the employer's liability is limited to payment of funeral expenses not exceeding £30.

The rates payable under Workers' Compensation have not been increased to meet the increased cost of living or to correspond to the increases in wages that have been gained during and since the war. Under present conditions they are entirely inadequate and out-of-date.

The N.S.W. Labour Council employs a Compensation Officer who gives expert advice and handles Compensation cases for injured trade unionists without charge. Trade Union assistance and the activities of the Compensation Department have become an important factor in influencing workers to join their Unions.

In the existing set-up representatives of employers and insurance companies fight every case in which they see a legal loophole by which they might avoid payments for which they are morally responsible, and it should be pointed out to workers that they are more likely to get just treatment if their Union is standing behind them. All workers should be advised to consult their Union before accepting any settlement for an injury.

Party Policy: 1. Revision of the rates payable under Workers' Compensation to bring them into line with present day wages;

2. Variation of the Act and tightening up of legal procedure to prevent employers' evasion of their responsibility;

3. Co-operation with trade unions for the achievement of these points.

FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT.

The Factories and Shops Act cannot really be classed as Social Services legislation, except perhaps as to those sections which are designed to improve the working conditions, health, safety and comfort of workers in factories.

The Act and Regulations under the Act confer very wide powers on the Department of Labour and Social Services to enforce adequate lighting, ventilation and air movement, sanitation and cleanliness, and provision of amenities such as dressing rooms, dining rooms, rest rooms, first aid equipment and attention, drinking water, showers, and washing facilities. Great importance is attached to guarding dangerous machinery.

In its industrial sections the Act also provides protection for young workers by prohibiting the employment of children under school age; the employment of males under 16 and females on dangerous machinery; the employment of males under 18 and females for long hours of work without a meal break or an excessive overtime or on night shift; the lifting of excessive weights by young people.

A State Factory Welfare Board has been created to police and control these provisions, and it is the practice of Trade Unions to invoke the services of the Board to secure, inter alia, prosecutions for failure to guard machinery, and to secure the installation of amenities.

Certificates of Fitness for Young Persons: Boys and girls under sixteen are required by law to produce a certificate of fitness before commencing factory work. Free medical

examination is given by the Department of Labour and Social Services and, in cases of lack of fitness, advice is given as to more suitable classes of work.

This, however, does not apply generally throughout industry and it is most important for the Trades Unions and Youth organisations to seek extension of free medical examination to all young people entering any type of employment.

With the passing of the new Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Act and the appointment of a number of Conciliation Commissioners it is likely that more attention will be paid to provision for amenities in Federal Awards, than has been done in the past. It should therefore be remembered that a Code of Industrial Conditions was prepared by the Commonwealth Department of Labour and National Services which has not been implemented. This Code goes a long way towards prescribing excellent factory conditions and it would be of great value to the industrial workers if it could be revived and incorporated in Awards.

HOUSEKEEPERS SERVICES.

The Housekeeper Service inaugurated by the N.S.W. Government is intended to assist families in periods of domestic emergency. The scheme is not fully operative because of lack of housekeepers, but to the extent to which they are available, they are sent to homes where there is illness, chiefly where a mother is ill and there are young children to be looked after.

A Committee has been set up to administer the service, which is responsible for allocation of the housekeepers and for deciding how long they should stay in a home and whether any contribution should be made by the householder.

Where the services of a housekeeper are urgently needed to meet some particular emergency, contact should be made with the Organising Secretary, phone BW 4495 Ext. 28.

LEGAL AID.

The Legal Aid Office was established, in its present form, under the Legal Assistance Act of 1943, brought down by the State Attorney General, Mr. C. Martin. Before this Act was passed, the Means Test was so stringent that only indigent persons could receive legal advice and assistance from the State. Now, however, free legal aid is available to the bulk of the working population of N.S.W., permissible income being the basic wage with an allowance of £50 a year for each dependant. This means that a man with a wife and two children could have an income of approximately £440 a year and still be eligible for assistance. A claimant for assistance may have an equity of £750 in a home and have other property to a net value of £100, and any particular item of property, such as a piano, may be disregarded in assessing property.

The office of the Public Solicitor is in Wembley Chambers, Hunter Street, Sydney. A claimant for legal assistance is required to fill in a form, obtainable at the office, and if he is eligible, the Public Solicitor decides what action shall be taken in his case. If it is decided that there is a case for a Court, the Public Solicitor assigns the case to a solicitor or a barrister. In some cases, particularly where a private solicitor has already been consulted, the claimant is allowed to nominate his own solicitor.

A panel of solicitors and barristers, comprising men of high standing in the legal profession, has been set up, to whom cases are assigned. No fees are payable to men handling cases for assisted persons, unless they win their case and the Court awards costs. The Court may not award costs against an assisted person.

Chamber Magistrates: Chamber Magistrates act as agents for the Public Solicitor throughout the State. Any member of the public may consult a Chamber Magistrate on any legal matter, and experience has shown the Magistrates to be both sympathetic and helpful. If the Chamber Magistrate thinks a person has a case for action at law he will advise him to that effect, and if the person has not the means to take private advice, will send him to the Public

Solicitor. In the country, the Chamber Magistrates send reports to the Public Solicitor, who, after investigation, assigns a solicitor in the town to handle the case.

In the Metropolitan area a Chamber Magistrate (sometimes two) is attached to each Court of Petty Sessions. There is a Chamber Magistrate in larger country towns, but in small towns his functions are discharged by the Clerk of Petty Sessions.

PUBLIC DEFENDER: Another important officer of the Attorney General's Department is the Public Defender, who is a permanent official, specialist in the criminal field. Defence of any person without means who is committed for trial on a major criminal charge, is automatically assigned to the Public Defender.

PERSONAL LOANS.

The lending of money for personal needs is an important function of the Rural Bank.

Loans ranging from £10 to £300 are made to meet any genuine need, e.g., medical expenses, educational expenses, payment of rates and taxes, or insurance premiums, consolidation of debts, etc. In cases of special emergency the loan may be greater than £300.

A low discount rate is charged and repayment is made by weekly, fortnightly or monthly instalments. One method of repayment is for an employer to make regular deductions from wages or salaries. When this is done the Bank Manager may decide that no other security is necessary.

Those who wish to avail themselves of this service should consult the Manager of the nearest Branch of the Rural Bank, or an official of the Personal Loans Department at Head Office.

GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE OF N.S.W.

The N.S.W. Govt. Insurance Office (cr. York and Barrack Sts.), transacts all classes of insurance business, with the public. It gives good service and cheaper insurance, and all its policies are guaranteed by the State.

UNITED STRUGGLE FOR A BETTER WAY OF LIFE.

The details set out in this booklet represent many of the services that are available to the people. Some of them are administered liberally and fairly, others still remain acts and regulations on paper and will only be implemented when the united action of the people is exerted. The important task of the Australian people today is to struggle against the developing economic crisis and for national independence against the domination of Yankee imperialism. This can be done by fighting unitedly for better social services, for reduced prices of essential living commodities, for increased wages for the working masses. These achievements would assist in improving living standards and would lay the basis for united mass action against capitalist exploitation and for a planned economy in which the social wellbeing of the toiling people is placed before the profits of a few. Such is the aim of the Australian Communist Party.



