

## PUBLIC ASSISTANCE VERSUS PUBLIC EDUCATION, OR YOUTH VERSUS AGE

J. J. RHYNE, University of Oklahoma, Norman

Usually the more limited the financial resources of a state the heavier the relief load and the greater the cost of the program. The emergence of old-age assistance as a major item of government expense, for this reason, poses a serious challenge to the future of public education in the poorer states. The clash of interest between the needs of youth and of age is not restricted to public education. Most of the funds available in all states for the public assistance program are going to Old Age Assistance, even though there is also a public assistance program in the form of Aid to Dependent Children. Roughly speaking, the country over, the aged are the beneficiaries of about four-fifths and the children one-fifth or less of the funds. The pressure for an ever-increasing portion of the available tax resources for old-age assistance presents a serious threat not only to the material wants and needs of the children but also to the educational needs. In some states, the urge to provide funds for old-age assistance has not been equally manifested in provision for aid to dependent children. In about a half dozen states, no state funds after eight years of operation of the Social Security Act have been set aside to meet the needs of children under the aid-to-dependent-children program. However, some of those states which have failed to provide for the care of children have been among the leaders in providing for the aged.

The really serious aspect of this failure to provide for the children as well as for the aged rests in the effect continuing neglect will have upon the future not only of those children whose needs are being inadequately met but upon the general welfare of oncoming generations. After all, the children of today are the future citizens of tomorrow. If as a result of an inadequate program for the needs of children, the schooling of an appreciable number of children is terminated as soon as or before the legal age of quitting is reached, the effects are felt not only by those directly involved, but also by the general public. If some of these youngsters are not given the chance to develop into normal grown-ups with healthy minds and bodies the public will find itself paying the costs in terms of extra expenditures for health and for social protection. While only a few states have failed completely to make provision for aid to dependent children, it should not be inferred that the other forty-odd states have accorded equal treatment for the children and for the aged. In no general section of the country, with the possible exception of the New England states and an occasional state elsewhere, have the children been given equal consideration. On the other hand, states which have provided most amply for the old folks have generally failed to provide equally well for the children. Texas, for example, while doing quite well for the aged, did not bother to start matching federal funds for aid to dependent children until a few years ago. Even here in Oklahoma we started out spending approximately eighty cents on every public-assistance dollar in the interest of the old folks, while only eleven cents on the relief dollar went to the children. Today, the amount going to the old-age-assistance program is still 72.5 per cent of the total, while the amount for the children has been increased to only 17 per cent of the total. Total expenditures in Oklahoma for old-age assistance for the year ending June 30, 1942, were \$17,310,215 while the amount going to aid for dependent children was only \$4,550,243.

Besides the contrasts in expenditures, equally significant are the contrasts with respect to the numbers cared for by states in the old-age-assistance and aid-to-dependent-children programs. In October 1942, there were 2,244,739 old-age-assistance recipients in the country as a whole and only 901,560 recipients of aid to dependent children. In Oklahoma, at the same time, the old-age-assistance recipients numbered 78,181 while the number of children receiving aid was only 43,398.