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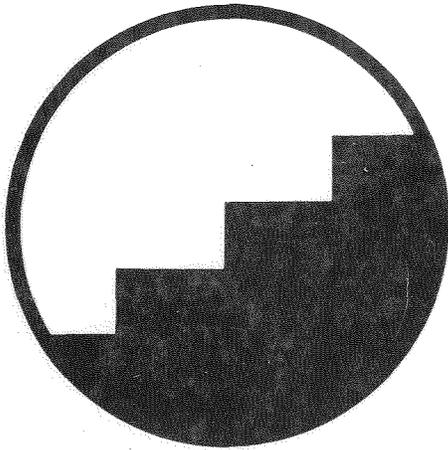
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Maine

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AUGUSTA, MAINE



report
of the

BLAINE HOUSE

CONFERENCE ON AGING

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SERVICES FOR AGING

MAINE DEPARTMENT
OF
HEALTH AND WELFARE



OCTOBER 1970

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STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04330

KENNETH M. CURTIS
GOVERNOR

October 19, 1970

DEAR FELLOW CITIZENS:

On September 23, 1970 the Blaine House Conference on Aging was held as a prologue to the 1971 White House Conference on Aging. It was also held to develop public support for legislative proposals affecting the elderly.

I am pleased to report that the Conference was a solid success exceeding my greatest expectations. The statement by each representative of the five Task Forces on Aging gave a lucid and vivid description of the plight faced by our older people and contained sound proposals for remedying the problems of elderly citizens. John B. Martin, U.S. Commissioner on Aging, offered excellent insights into how senior citizens may be assisted. He and other federal officials offered realistic and practical suggestions for all levels of government joining hands with the elderly to meet their great needs.

The Conference adopted several resolutions as an Action Program for Maine's Elderly. I have read the resolutions and carefully reviewed each of the statements given at the Conference. I commit myself to meeting these problems so far as possible within the range of responsibility I have as Governor. I strongly urge you to consider the statements presented in this report and to take positive steps to achieve their recommendations.

Sincerely,


Kenneth M. Curtis
Governor



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELFARE

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04330

DEAN FISHER, M. D.
COMMISSIONER

October 19, 1970

Honorable Kenneth M. Curtis
Governor of Maine
State House
Augusta, Maine 04330

Dear Governor Curtis:

It is a pleasure to present to you a report of the Blaine House Conference on Aging. This document contains an account of the Conference drawn from the prepared statements presented on September 23rd. I have found these statements to be enlightening and valuable proposals for action to improve the lives of Maine's senior citizens.

At this time on behalf of the Department of Health and Welfare and Services for Aging, I express sincere thanks to the U.S. Administration on Aging for their wise advice in conducting the Conference, and especially for the personal participation of Commissioner Martin. Additionally I congratulate the members of the Task Forces on Aging and the Maine Committee on Aging for their excellent work in preparation for the Blaine House Conference on Aging.

The Department and my staff stand ready to assist the older citizens of Maine in any way we can. It is a pleasure to carry on this work as one part of the State's preparation for the 1971 White House Conference on Aging.

Sincerely,


Dean Fisher
Commissioner

DF/dd

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INTRODUCTION

The Blaine House Conference on Aging was held September 23, 1970 in Augusta. On November 6, 1969 Governor Kenneth M. Curtis called the Conference as Maine's prologue to the 1971 White House Conference on Aging. On that same day he charged the Maine Committee on Aging with preparing recommendations to assist our elderly citizens. To refine the Committee's capability, the skills, knowledge and financial support of Services for Aging, Maine Department of Health and Welfare were provided via the Older Americans Act. This document contains an overview and summary of these activities.

We gratefully acknowledge the consideration of the speakers in providing written copies of their remarks. The statements of the speakers included here are taken verbatim from the person's prepared text. Miss Worthley's remarks have been taken verbatim from the tape recording of the Conference. In the very rare instance where the prepared statement or tape recording were unclear, we have clarified within the context of the speaker's comments.

We also gratefully acknowledge the fine press coverage of the Conference. Many copies of newspaper accounts have been included here, since they add an excellent dimension to understanding the problems of Maine's elderly. Unfortunately space limitations and concern for redundancy precluded use of all newspapers' accounts. Where several papers had similar reports, we have included only a single example of the total coverage, while showing typical headlines from other papers.

We wish to especially highlight the outstanding participation of Maine's citizens - notably the older people - in these events. The 1,000 citizens at the Conference were strong representatives of the several thousand people who joined in the pre-Blaine House Conference activities. This excellent effort reaffirms our confidence in the ability of people to wisely affect state and national policies and programs.

Copies of the report Steps for Maine's Elderly may be obtained by contacting the Maine Committee on Aging, State House, Augusta, Maine 04330.

Services for Aging
Maine Department of Health and Welfare
State House Augusta, Maine 04330
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PART I

STEPS FOR MAINE'S ELDERLY

EDITORIAL COMMENT

AND

NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS

Maine's Elderly: Are

The growth in the number of elderly people in Maine, 65 and over, far outpaces the growth in the rest of Maine's population.

Between 1960 and 1970, the number of people 65 years and over in Maine increased almost 11 per cent, while the rest of the population here increased only one half of one per cent.

Consider the facts, and what they portend.

More than 12 per cent of Maine's population is over 65. Only three other states are ahead of Maine in this respect — Florida, Iowa and Nebraska.

By 1980, Maine may have the highest percentage of elderly citizens of any state in the nation. The projections indicate almost 130,000 in the State of Maine over 65.

These figures, and others we will quote, come from a study on Maine's Elderly, just issued by Governor Curtis in preparation for a Blaine House conference. It is a brilliant, astonishing and uncomfortable document.

Most of Maine's elderly are women. We have about 20 per cent more women over 65 than men.

Most of these senior citizens are Maine born. In fact, 65 per cent of all persons born in Maine before 1896 still lived in Maine in 1960.

More than half of Maine's elderly live alone. About 90 per cent of the elderly women, and 80 per cent of the elderly men are unemployed.

The median income for the women was only \$1,150 a year, about \$22 weekly, in 1967. The elderly men did a trifle better — \$2500 a year.

This finely documented report states flatly; "At least 50 per cent of Maine's elderly have less money than the minimum budget deems sufficient to live on."

That indeed is a terrible fact, and an indictment.

How to correct it?

This Report recommends these sensible actions, among many others, which we wholeheartedly endorse;

1. A better chance to work for those able and willing to do so. Work creates not only income, but it creates a sense of purpose; of being needed, of personal satisfaction, which are of true significance.

2. A change in the present Social Security policy so widows may get 100 per cent instead of only 80 per cent of the benefits (Remember that figure of \$22 a week for elderly women?)

3. Minimum Social Security benefits should be raised so they at least equal the minimum budget for living in Maine, as formulated by the U.S. Dept. of Labor.

4. Utility rates for heat, light, telephone, gas should be reduced and no advance deposits should be required. High local property taxes are often a terrifying burden to the elderly, living alone on less than minimum money. Where low income warrants it, property tax for the elderly should be cut.

Poor health is of course a constant problem and worry to many of Maine's elderly.

What makes this worse is that almost 35 per cent of Maine's elderly have no transportation. Just getting to a drug store, food store or a doctor, say the elderly, is sometimes impossible. Transportation is their third biggest worry after lack of money and poor health.

As a result of not being able to get to stores, many elderly eat badly and thereby further injure their poor health. Surely volunteer transportation pools could be quickly established in every town where anyone will take the lead in starting it.

Another big problem which bedevils the el-

They Maine's Mistreated?

derly is keeping their home in repair. Most live alone. Many can't get to town for the materials needed for repairs, even if they have the tools and energy to perform them. (Even the well bodied and financially well heeled know how hard it is to get minor repairs done.) What if you are elderly, near broke, have no phone, have no car? What then?

Maine, this Report clearly shows, doesn't give much help to its elderly, who are ever increasing in numbers and in need. Yet more help is available to them than many of the elderly realize.

The difficulty is they do not know where to turn for that help. The necessary information does not reach them. Or it comes in government forms and pamphlets which baffle and frighten them, by the fine print and the number of questions and the jaw breaking language.

In short we can't even communicate effectively with our elderly. Maybe one reason is because the issuers of these governmentese tracts don't know the elderly, lonely people they are writing for.

If you have the warm impression that your Town or your state old age assistance helps many of our elderly, you are wrong.

Barely a dozen out of 100 get any such help. Whereas over 30 in 100 use their own savings, and 76 in 100 rely on Social Security. And Social Security is far from enough.

Maine's elderly get the lowest Social Security benefits of any state in New England. They get an average of 10 per cent less than other New Englanders.

When your benefits are under \$100 a month, those \$10 which a Maine person does not get in comparison with his neighbors, can be vital.

Furthermore close to half of Maine recipients of Social Security get less than \$85 a month. A higher percent of Maine people get less Social Security benefits than any New England state.

Such facts are too little known. They need to be widely known.

This Report on the Elderly in Maine is outstanding, the best perhaps of any such report to cross our desk, and we get hundreds.

Read it. Write to the Governor for a copy. Make certain your State Senator and Representatives read it too. And get your candidates to campaign about the problems of Maine's elderly before you cast your vote in November. Get them on record as to what they will do, if you send them to Augusta.

In 1970, an aging man or woman has few ways of continuing their contribution to society. Therein lies the sadness. They are retired from their occupation. They are separated from their family. Too many live alone. Too few have funds enough to live on.

Yet these were the very people who 65 and 70 years ago, when they were young, had grandparents living amongst them. They remember grandparents who planted corn, painted the barn, took them for sleigh rides, went visiting. The elderly didn't eke out life in isolation then.

One reads this report and asks — "Have we been paying such overwhelming attention to the younger generation that we have forgotten our parents? Are we so mesmerized by teenagers that we ignore our elderly to whom we owe so much"?

This is a question worth thought.

For some unknown author once wrote "The test of a people is how they behave toward the old".

Friday, September 4, 1970

'the elderly as nigger'

The college students, when they feel particularly oppressed, have a saying which describes themselves as "the student as nigger," meaning that things are going so badly for them that it may be compared with the way the white society has routinely treated black people in this country.

This is quite absurd, for there is no more privileged group in America than the college students.

But there is something to be said about "the elderly as nigger," and that, according to a booklet we have been reading, is a quite accurate description of how we in Maine and elsewhere across the nation treat poor people over 65.

The booklet is the 262-page report called "Steps for Maine's Elderly," the Report of the Governor's Committee on Aging. It's worth anybody's time to study it carefully, for it paints a grim picture of what life is like for large numbers of the elderly in Maine and across the nation.

One of the project's consultants, Sam Andrews of Esco, suggests that to the black poor, disadvantaged poor and poor white trash we add the "geriatric poor." That is, those people who are poor simply because they are old.

"Defining aging man as the geriatric poor," the report notes, "is only one step away from treating older people as a minority group. A minority label can be attached to the aging only when younger people stop thinking of older people as part of themselves. There are clear signs that this may be happening."

The present plight of the elderly poor in Maine and elsewhere, the report clearly points out, has as its cause the disintegration of the extended family after the turn of the century and the resulting switch in dependency by the elderly from their own assets (land, home, younger members of the family), to vague promises by government and corporations — promises that have never been carried out. To quote from the report again, "It appears that historical accidents and the secondary by-products of achieving the worthy goals of the 'new morality', mass education and industrialization have returned aging man to a condition of dependency equivalent to his infancy.

"Today aging man relies on corporations and government, organized for their own purposes, to take his interests under their wing, as if his interests were their own. He now relies on industrial conglomerates, competing with a strong centralized government, to establish complex national economic policies."

Quite obviously, in the majority of instances, both government and the corporations have failed miserably in their obligations to the elderly.

Over the course of more than 60 specific recommendations, the governor's committee suggests various ways in which the state, local and national governments can do far more than they ever have.

The committee has not yet drawn up a set of priorities, but it would seem to us that three needs are crucial: 1) an immediate and substantial hike in Social Security payments, including a cost-of-living escalator clause; 2) establishment of a rational retirement system in industry and the civil service (more than half those now participating in "retirement systems" will never collect a cent); and 3) immediate implementation of a plan to provide tax relief for the elderly poor.

Federal legislation is necessary to accomplish the first two proposals mentioned above, but the Maine Legislature can do the third by itself. It refused to do so during the last session of the Legislature; it would be a tragedy if the legislators turned the elderly down again on this point.

Tax relief is crucial, we think, for without it many of the state's elderly poor cannot afford to remain in their own homes. They must move out and into one of those tiny apartments up over the store downtown.

But if he can't pay the taxes on his own home, move the elderly man must. "In leaving home," the report says, "he must break off his roots, and roots too often stay broken when one is older, and the life blood oozes out."

We can do better than that.

Boston Evening Globe, Monday, 9/28/70

Report misses core of problem

By Joseph B. Levin
Globe Staff

Although Maine has only 118,000 persons over age 65, they have received VIP treatment in a report to Gov. Kenneth Curtis from the state's Committee on Aging, whose five task forces have completed a moving and detailed picture of the elderly, their needs and their problems.

The report is very readable and presents the information in plain English — as you'd expect from state of Mainers. It concludes with a set of 51 recommendations for either state or Federal action, or both.

But after touching on problems handled in a score or more governmental departments, bureaus or agencies, the best that the report can come up with is a recommendation to establish a Maine Interdepartmental Council on Aging composed of representatives from appropriate state agencies.

"The Council should be advisory to the work of the

Aging Unit in the Maine Dept. of Health and Welfare," the report says. "It should insure separate agencies are not undertaking duplicative programs ..." To help carry this out, the report would beef up the Community Services Unit of the Health and Welfare Department.

No doubt the recommendations reflect political and economics realities in Maine, but what the report doesn't do is grasp the core of the state's aging problem. If you have a report that recognizes the inadequacies of the recent set-up, why not seek a cure by creating a full-scale Dept. of Aging with executive authority to deal with the problems? Massachusetts this year took that role. What the elderly in Maine need is not a powerless advisory bureaucracy to help the old line do-nothing bureaucracies but a powerful arm of state government to implement existing programs and to improve upon them.

Over-65 Me. citizen count grows yearly, 50% on insufficient funds

AUGUSTA (AP) — "The need for action on the problems of the elderly cannot be overstated," Gov. Curtis told a news conference here Monday.

In announcing the release of a report from the State Committee on Aging, Curtis noted 118,000 of Maine's citizens (or 12.1 per cent of the state's population) are over 65.

According to the report, these figures will rise to 129,000, or 13 per cent by 1980, the governor added.

There have also been some indications, according to early census reports, that there was "a net in-migration of about 2,700 persons over 65 years of age into Maine during the 1960's.

"If these estimates are confirmed by the 1970 census data, it would suggest that Maine is becoming more popular as a residence for retired persons.."

Curtis said while some of the elderly coming to Maine might have "adequate means, the fact remains that Maine has an elderly population which is growing in size and needs."

The committee report will be used as the focal point for a Blaine House Conference on Aging to be held Sept. 23.

The report, the governor noted, gives, for the first time, "an accurate picture of the income, health, employment, transportation and housing problems of our elderly population.

"That picture includes some disturbing details."

These details, he continued, are:

—At least 50 per cent of Maine's elderly couples have less money than the \$3,165 minimum sufficient for a retired couple.

—The annual health care costs for the elderly are three times more than they are for people under 65 years of age.

Though most older people are covered by Medicare, this program pay just less than half of the total health cost.

Curtis said he hopes to put many of the committee's recommendations in his own legislative program, including top priority to "a meaningful program of tax relief for the elderly."

9/1/70
MORNING SENTINEL, Tuesday,

Gov. Curtis Cites Problem Of Elderly

Portland, Me., Evening Express, Monday 8/31/70

Curtis Finds Aging Report 'Disturbing'

Our Neglected Elderly

Thank you for your excellent editorial based on a recent study of Maine's elderly. You are right in stating that individual towns and the entire state of Maine are neglecting our senior citizens.

This should be a political issue, as you suggested, and I'm happy to see at last that you've made your readers aware of this heartbreaking problem.

My father has been in a nursing home since 1967 so I know from personal experience that elderly people need much more financial assistance not only from their hometown and state but also from the federal government.

I suggest everyone who cares about their parents or grandparents do something now and write to Governor Curtis and your state senator and representatives.

Mrs. Louise C. Davis

Rumford

Maine Sunday Telegram, September 13, 1970

Report On Elderly Underlines Issues

By KENT WARD

AUGUSTA — Labor Day is the traditional last long weekend of the summer for the working man — white collar as well as blue collar workers who will return to work Tuesday morning and head into the home stretch toward the end of the calendar year.

But there will be no return to work for most of Maine's 118,000 older citizens — many of whom are capable of holding down a job and willing to do so, but find that they are no longer welcome in the labor market.

In Depth

The problem of employment of elderly people, along with problems of income, health, housing, community and social services, is reported on in depth in a recent report of the Maine Committee on Aging.

The report may well be the basis for legislation to be con-

sidered by the 105th Legislature, aimed at alleviating the problems of Maine's senior citizens.

Gov. Kenneth M. Curtis, who formed the Committee on Aging in November of last year and named Dominic T. Giordano of Sangerville as its chairman, has called a Blaine House Conference on Aging for Sept. 23 at the Augusta Armory.

Proposals Follow

The day-long session is expected to result in the firming up of legislative proposals from information gleaned by five task forces from more than 2,000 Maine elderly persons.

The report states that "the real issue of employment for senior citizens in Maine is one of income maintenance and fulfillment of leisure time." It acknowledges that because of a per capita and median personal income in Maine which is lower than the other New England states — plus pockets of unemployment and dependence upon seasonal work — "much of the emphasis of state and local governmental units must be directed toward attainment of jobs for presently unemployed or underemployed younger workers."

Report On Elderly

"Although distasteful, the placing of a low priority on employment opportunities for the elderly must be done for the overall economic well-being of the state," the report asserts.

However, that means that increased emphasis must be placed upon provision of adequate income maintenance to supplement low retirement income and health and community services to allow older persons to maximize their low incomes, according to the study.

Recommendations

As a result, these recommendations have been made to Gov. Curtis in respect to employment of the elderly:

—Employers should be stimulated to review their mandatory age 65 retirement policies with encouragement to eliminate these policies.

—Employers and union should be periodically reminded of statutes which prohibit discrimination against job applicants in the age 45 to 65 group.

—The Maine Employment Security Commission should develop programs of outreach to develop, seek, and recruit over age 45 workers. The MESC should also intensify programs of employment, counseling, and training for these workers.

—Intensified programs of training and education should be utilized in the state for older workers to prepare them for available jobs.

—Additional staff should be funded for the Community Service Unit of the State Department of Health and Welfare for development specialists in the area of employment opportunities for older people.

—Additional staff persons should be hired to develop further employment opportunities for those age 45 and over through increased use of available federal programs.

Major Problem

The report emphasized that the income problem is the major problem confronting the elderly in Maine today. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, an individual should have a minimum income \$1,720 per year to meet the lowest budget estimate. More than 61 per cent of the individuals age 65 and over in Maine are below this minimum level of income.

As a result, the report contains these recommendations for boosting Social Security assistance:

—The present policy of granting widows only 80 per cent of her husband's benefit should be replaced by granting of the full benefit entitled to her husband.

—Through the use of some appropriate cost of living index, Social Security should be adjusted annually to reflect the current cost of living. Benefits should be raised in a dollar amount.

Oldsters' Problems Stressed

Would Exempt

—In order to stimulate employment of older workers and raise their incomes, employes and employers should be exempt from paying Social Security tax on workers over age 62.

—Workers over age 65 should be given a delayed retirement credit in the form of permanently increased benefits at the time of retirement.

—The restriction on the amount of money Social Security recipients may earn in post-retirement jobs should be liberalized and more fully explained to the public.

Many other recommendations in various other areas of concern to elderly citizens are also contained in the report. Among them:

—Legislation that gas, electric, and telephone companies be required to grant a 50 per cent reduction in rates for service, and eliminate deposit requirements for service to the elderly should be passed by the legislature.

Build Facilities

—Building of extended and intermediate care facilities must be stimulated immediately through guarantees of low-cost loans by a state health facilities authority.

—State standards for nursing homes should be upgraded and a list of homes published by degree of care, services, and costs.

—Maine should undertake a dental program for the elderly with payments to be covered by Medicare and Medicaid. Eye care and hearing services should also be expanded.

—Transportation methods must be devised to increase mobility for senior citizens. Financial and legal services should be initiated at local levels.

—Tax relief for the elderly must be granted immediately. Public housing must increase through the State House Authority and local housing authorities. Rent and interest supplement programs for the aged should be stimulated.

Common Law Aged Is

BY HAZEL LOVEITT

Does the nice old man next door refer to his lady love, a 75-year-old widow with whom he shares his home, as his "housekeeper"?

The couple deserve your sympathy. It's a sad fact of life today that many of the nation's aged are living together as commonlaw man and wife because they can't afford to marry.

A social worker says she knows of several such couples in the Greater Portland area alone who are posing as man-and-housekeeper because a marriage certificate would be an automatic pass to a cute poverty.

First, the woman would lose any benefits from private pensions due her as widow of a covered worker.

Second, her Social Security benefits would be reduced from the 82½ per cent she receives as a widow to the 50 per cent she'd get as a wife.

That 32½ per cent can mean the difference between meat on the table thrice a week or beans and soup every day.

You can't sell man-and-housekeeper couples on the old adage that two can live cheaper than one. They'll drag

out rent receipts to prove you wrong.

ACCORDING TO a recent report by the Governor's Committee on Aging, about half of Maine's 118,000 senior citizens have less money than is deemed minimally necessary. Their income, says the committee, is below the national average and also below the average income of elderly people in other New England states.

The governor's committee recommends that through the use of some appropriate cost of living index, Social Security should be adjusted annually to reflect current living costs. Among other recommendations made to upgrade the economic standards of Maine's senior citizens the committee advocates granting her husband's full Social Security benefit to a widow.

Several senior citizens interviewed at a Golden Age Club luncheon in Portland Salvation Army headquarters agreed that an increase in Social Security benefits would certainly make life a lot easier and happier.

"There's no question about the need for it," asserts Carl E. Jordan, 86, Congress St. "The dollar I earned years ago is down to about 25 cents now."

Jordan, a retired bakery supervisor, was particularly interested in the committee's recommendation that employers drop policies that make retirement mandatory at 65. "I think some retirees would like to work maybe a day or so a week."

The committee report states: "Although distasteful, the placing of low priority on employment opportunities for the elderly must be done for the overall economic well being of the state of Maine."

It would seem that goal has been achieved.

IN 1969, the Maine Employment Security Commission placed some 126 senior citizens in jobs. That was only nine per cent of the 1,362 aged job seekers on its books.

Perhaps re-education of the older worker to qualify him for available jobs or work that won't deprive younger people of employment is the answer.

The committee feels this can be done and suggests jobs in such federally-funded projects as the Foster Grandparents program, which places neglected or deprived children with suitable older couples, or as workers in poverty areas under the VISTA (Volunteers In Service to America) program.

Mrs. Edith Clements, 74, of State St., is a good example of a working retiree. A former cook at the Salvation Army camp, she elected to work part time as a cook in the Army's headquarters on Cumberland Avenue following her retirement. "What would I do if I didn't have my work? I wouldn't know what to do with all that time on my hands. I plan to keep going as long as I can."

Now that she's past 72 and can earn as much as she wishes without forfeiting any Social Security benefits, Mrs. Clements works a six hour day, five days a week, preparing meals for members of the Army's Golden Age Club and staff members.

At home she makes cookies for her ten great-grandchildren when they come to visit and prepares meals for herself and a son who lives in the same apartment building.

Her husband, who died 12 years ago, was a caretaker on the Gov. Baxter Mackworth Island estate for 36 years until he retired. The Clements and their six youngsters lived on the estate.

Cont. on Next Page

We Asked:

How Do You Feel About Older People?

MRS. SHARON PINE, Rockland — "Some of the older generation are old-fashioned and narrow-minded. They vary in different areas and they tend to stick to the way they were brought up. They use less psychology and more 'out to the woodshed' tactics. Younger parents try to figure out the way things should be done instead of fadhering to the way their mother did it."

Portland, Me., Press Herald, Monday, 9/14/70

MISS SUSAN SPRAGUE, Brunswick — "They were young once and have a lot of experience to pass along to us. They had fads in their day just like younger people do today. I gain a lot by listening to my parents. Sometimes we don't always think exactly alike."

EARL CAREY, Gorham — "They really care about the war. They feel the same way about it as younger people. About long hair, I don't think they have too much to say. The kids are going to grow it anyway."

MRS. THOMAS FERRANTE, Cumberland Center — "They have their own ideas. I don't think they're fuddy-duddy, though. I think they feel the same way as most everyone else does."

Cont. on Next Page

Sad Fact Of Life In Maine

ALTHOUGH THE COMMITTEE stressed lack of sufficient income as the biggest problem of Maine's aged, Mrs. Clements doesn't agree.

"I think it's loneliness. We can always manage to get by on a slim budget if we must, but we've just got to see and talk with people to be really happy."

The committee claims, however, that lack of companionship is not as major a problem as many believe. A survey of oldster citizens in York County in 1960, for example, found only 16 per cent who regarded it as such. Most of these said the difficulty was more a lack of transportation to reach places where companionship could be found.

The committee report lists transportation in third place in acute needs of Maine's aged. Poor health is second.

While lack of transportation rarely poses an insurmountable problem for the aged in cities like Portland, Lewiston or Bangor, very often the retiree living in a small town or rural area must depend on friends for transportation to the doctor, drug store or even to buy groceries.

NATIONWIDE, health care costs for the aged have increased some 39 per cent since 1966 and Maine's oldest residents are feeling the pinch too.

While most people are covered by Medicare, it's estimated that this only pays 66 per cent of the hospital bill and 72 per cent of their doctor bills. It doesn't pay for drugs, dentists, other professional services or health aids such as glasses and hearing aids. Only 13,000 of Maine's aged are covered by Medicaid which pays more costs than Medicare but still doesn't cover everything.

Maine's Committee on Aging advocates a better system of delivering better health care.

In this area it would like to see expansion of home health service programs such as the one recently started by Mercy Hospital. It also stresses the need for mobile multi-phasic

screening laboratories and other mobile facilities to administer dental and eye care and hearing services.

Many of those quizzed by the committee listed their biggest health problems as those associated with growing old.

However, 83 per cent of Maine's senior citizens succumb to heart disease, cancer and strokes and a multiphasic screening program would be able to give an early warning on such symptoms.

This in turn would lead to quicker and more effective treatment.

What it would eventually mean would be improved health care for the state as a whole. By spotting and treating ailments among the elderly quickly, it should drastically reduce the crush the elderly presently place on hospital beds.

ANOTHER RECOMMENDATION which could help solve the three major problems of Maine's aged is a meals on wheels program.

A certain number of free meals will ease their economic plight; the fact that they will need to leave home less frequently will help their transportation difficulties; and a nutritional balance should improve their health.

A meals on wheels program, the first in Maine, is being introduced soon in Portland by the Salvation Army under a Model Cities grant.

A meal, or possibly two, will be prepared in the Army kitchen, packed in thermal containers and delivered to the home-bound aged of the inner city. It will serve 100 people at first.

The committee also advocated expansion of the state's Homemaker Program, administered by the Department of Health and Welfare, which provides services to enable an elderly person in reasonably good mental and physical health to live alone in his own home, room or apartment.

The committee's report, and the many recommendations to better the lives of Maine's aged, will be the topic of a Blaine House Conference on Aging next Wednesday.

GILBERT "GIL" POLIQUIN, Lewiston — "The older generation isn't so bad. They go on plugging away at things much the same way we do in college. I may feel a little differently about them because I'm in my last year (of college) and have been in a business on the side in which I deal with older people a lot. Times are changing so fast that it is sometimes hard to make the right decision."

DONALD BELANGER, Biddeford — "They're all right as long as they leave the kids alone. They're always nice to have around and there's always a time when you need them."

WILLIAM MORANG, Rockport — "Any generation that can send a man to the moon can't be all bad."

MISS DORIS BRILLANT, Topsham — "When they were teen-agers, they probably had basically the same problems as we face today. They are just concerned about us. I really want the opinions of my parents."

GAYLE HALL, Sanford — "I think the 'older generation' has done the best it could in view of all the problems that have arisen. Decisions have had to be made, and one can't always tell until afterward if it was the 'right' decision to have made."

JEFFREY RUMERY, Biddeford — "I don't like them that much. They're always in the way. But sometimes they're all right. Most of the time, though, they don't understand what we are doing."

More than 43% of Maine elderly must get along on less than \$2,000 per year

(First of two parts)

It's called a report—Report of the Governor's Committee on Aging—but out of the welter of statistics and facts stares the near-poverty and isolation, the frustrations and loneliness of Maine's elderly.

Of 1,705 elderly surveyed during March and April, 1970, 43.8 per cent said that they have incomes of less than \$2,000 per year. At the same time, 54 per cent ranked health and income as major problems. In the report, a task force of 500 elderly workers concluded from these survey results that health and income problems are closely related.

Apparently, many of these elderly need financial assistance

but do not ask for it. The report said that the number one topic most respondents would like to know more about is financial assistance programs.

The report, which contains recommendations as well as survey results, is a working paper for the Blaine House Conference on Aging Sept. 23 at the Augusta State Armory. The Blaine House Conference will specify recommendations, adopted from the report, for action by the 105th legislature, said Dominic T. Giordano, chairman of Maine's Committee on Aging. Recommendation of legislation for Maine will not be the extent of the reach of the Blaine House Conference. The conference will prepare its delegates for participation in the 1971 White House Conference on Aging.

The survey reported that the respondents sources of income were inadequate to finance their major needs, much less those of lower priority. Social security was the first source of income for 54.8 per cent of those elderly surveyed. Investments or savings and employment ranked second and third as sources of income for the elderly surveyed.

"Although income derived from employment is a major source for 19.2 percent of the respondents, few of the respondents are engaged in full time employment," the report says.

The 43.2 per cent of the respondents who are widows are particularly vulnerable to an inadequate source of income; they receive lower social security than couples or single people.

Those surveyed listed their first and second major expense items per month as food and shelter. The report said, "Despite the high proportion of income spent on food, the respondents indicated they had insufficient income to purchase nutritious food."

Food was the largest expense for 43.6 of those surveyed; 44 per cent spent most of their money on rent or mortgage or property taxes. Those who spent most of their money on food, yet could not afford a nutritious diet, probably had very little money for other major expenditures. Those who spent most of their money on shelter, probably did not have enough left to buy nutritious food.

The report reads, "On the average, older people spend \$900 per year on shelter." It also reported that 63 per cent of the respondents were homeowners. High property taxes were rated as the number one housing problem by 29 per cent of the elderly surveyed. Those elderly who comprise the 43.8 per cent who make less than \$2,000 per year, probably spend at least half of their income for shelter.

The report linked income problems with health problems, "From what senior citizens told us in the survey, it seems that the lower the income they had the more frequently they also reported health problems." As the respondents' incomes decreased, less and less money could be spent on health care, after paying for food and shelter. If they did not have enough money for nutritious food, they probably had to neglect financing their health care, which had a lower priority.

"The most frequently checked option under the category of health was generally poor health," the survey reported. "The second most frequently checked item was bad eyesight and tied for third were poor hearing and poor walking," said the survey.

Low income contributes to generally poor health in that low income elderly will have little or no money left for health expenditures, after they buy food and shelter. Health expenditures which they probably could not afford include hearing aids, eye glasses, and medication. These items are not covered by medicare or medicaid programs.

While low income helps perpetuate poor health, poor health in turn, perpetuates low income. When respondents were asked to check the reasons why they did not work, they most frequently checked "poor health."

Problems Of Elderly Top Drawer: Curtis

AUGUSTA (AP) — "The need for action on the problems of the elderly cannot be overstated," Gov. Curtis told a news conference here Monday.

The committee report will be used as the focal point for a Blaine House Conference on Aging to be held Sept. 23.

The report, the governor

Bangor Daily News, Tuesday, 9/1/70

Curtis Cites Necessity Of Guidelines For Aged Citizens

Help The Elderly

I read with concern the true facts of America's most terrible stories of the suffering endured by retired wage earners in the wake of this creeping inflation, particularly if they are not so fortunate as to enjoy the benefits of a union or company pension program. One of the mysteries of this complex age is why so many politicians, economists and commentators, especially those beholden to the administration, ignore the plight of the retired wage earner.

This is not only true in other cities but here in Maine, especially in Portland, one can see and hear and even read about the hardships and the terrible penalty that inflation is imposing on those who can least afford it. And what is happening to them should serve as a frightening warning to all, for none of us can escape the consequences of the daily dilution of the dollar. Many of these older citizens thought that when they retired, they could live out their lives in comfort and not be a burden to their children or to the Great Society. Many of these citizens never became poor until they became old.

Our older citizens should not be put on a political treadmill that keeps them panting in pursuit of federal handouts, so long as they deliver votes to their benefactors on election day. As long as inflation persists, they must be extended larger benefits just to keep their heads above water. Let's try to give our older citizens, present and future, the greatest gift of all, a stable dollar.

Matthew E. O'Toole

Portland

Portland, Me., Press Herald, Monday, 9/14/70

'Aging' report indicates need for liberalizing social security rules

By JEAN HILDEBRANDE

(Second of two parts)

The survey of the Governor's Committee on Aging revealed the poverty of many of Maine's elderly citizens. The recommendations which followed the survey recognized that this poverty will not be reversed by just a dole to the elderly from the rest of the community.

Social security was the main source of income of the elderly surveyed. But social security and the myriad aid programs don't alleviate the isolation of the elderly person from the community.

So the aged may take part in the community, the governors committee recommended that employment opportunities should be developed for elderly in services to other Maine citizens.

These services might include community aides or volunteers in schools, recreation departments, hospitals, nurseries, nursing homes, and for shut-ins.

In addition to jobs to involve elderly in the community, the committee recommended that greater emphasis should be placed on senior citizens industries and the development of community projects. Also, senior citizen multiple purpose centers must be expanded to serve all Maine elderly.

The report said that the elder-

ly want to live with minimum dependence on other people but the recommendations do not emphasize community involvement and independence.

The report recommends that sufficient income from public sources be assured the elderly by providing them with at least a subsistence level income from social security. Almost 90 per cent of Maine's elderly are now receiving social security benefits.

Widows are especially hard hit by frugal social security benefits: they receive a benefit only 80 per cent of their husband's benefit. A large number of older women in Maine live under this hardship; 50 per cent of the women over 65 are widows.

The report recommended that the present 80 per cent policy should be changed to allow a widow the full benefit entitled to her husband.

Other recommendations for insuring that social security would be at least a subsistence level included:

Social security benefits should be adjusted by an appropriate cost of living index. Minimum social security benefits should be raised to a level insuring adequate income for all senior citizens.

The report recommends that social security avoid penalizing the aged for supplementing a

subsistence social security benefit with earnings or for working past the age of 65.

The recommendations said, "The amount of earnings a social security beneficiary may have before receiving reduced payments should be increased.

To encourage elderly workers, workers age 62 and over, as well as their employers should be exempt from social security taxes. Workers who retire after 65 should be given permanently increased benefits at the time of retirement. As Social security works now, it penalizes the worker who wants to work full-time after age 65. The worker who retires at age 68 receives the same amount of benefits as he would if he quit at age 65.

Other sources of income must be opened to prevent conditions shown by the survey. According to these results, elderly did not have enough income, with social security as their major source, to buy nutritious food, much less adequately finance needs which had a lower priority. The report said that these other sources of income include: old age assistance benefits, medicare and medicaid, food stamps, donated commodities, tax relief, and housing loans.

Old age assistance benefits should be adjusted by a cost of living index. "The property tax lien for recipients should be abolished," the report said.

When an elderly person agrees

to accept old age assistance, a property tax lien is placed on his property; he can neither sell his property to get out of debt nor bequeath his property to his heirs.

One elderly man said that the low income elderly person is scared of a lien on his property; to avoid a lien, he often will not take state aid. The elderly fears that when he dies, the state, not his children will get his land, which he may have lived on and farmed most of his life.

Since food is one of the two major expenses of the elderly, yet they do not have nutritious food, the report recommended that the food available to the elderly should be increased. Such an increase would compensate for the inadequate income the elderly have to spend on food.

Specifically, the report suggested that elderly participation be expanded in the donated commodity and food stamp programs.

The second major expense of the elderly surveyed was shelter. The report's recommendations include tax relief and rehabilitation loans.

The tax relief and loan recommendations for homeowners were as follows: Tax relief to the elderly property holder must be granted immediately preferably with relief based upon income. Housing programs and financial institutions should be encouraged to develop low-cost rehabilitation and modernization loan programs for the elderly.

The report suggested that medicare and medicaid be enlarged to pay for prescription drugs, dental, eye, and hearing care. In the survey results, these health needs had a low priority on the elderly's list of expenditures. Apparently, they did not have enough money left after they paid for food and shelter to adequately finance these needs. Their forced neglect of these needs is reflected in the survey results, where they said that their major health problem was "generally poor health." They said they had trouble seeing, hearing and walking.

Maine Governor's unit outlines needs of aged

Special to The Christian Science Monitor

Recommendations made

Augusta, Maine

A Sept. 23 Blaine House Conference on Aging has been scheduled here by Gov. Kenneth M. Curtis to discuss possible senior-citizen legislation for consideration by the next Legislature.

The conference is an outgrowth of a final report submitted by the Maine Committee on Aging appointed by Governor Curtis last November.

The committee and its five task forces composed of some 250 volunteers canvassed the state interviewing about 2,000 elderly people about their needs and living conditions.

The research program, named "Steps for Me" (Maine elderly), was undertaken by two professional firms. Governor Curtis calls the resulting report "really the voices of thousands of elderly citizens brought together for the first time."

The study attempts to supply answers to the problems of the state's 118,000 elderly people in the areas of income, health, housing, employment, community services, and social services.

Fourth-ranking state

Maine ranks fourth nationally—behind Florida, Iowa, and Nebraska—in the percentage of persons age 65 or over among its population. The 118,000 senior citizens represent 12.1 percent of the state's population of less than 1 million.

The study shows that Maine's typical older person is 73, a widow who has lived in Maine almost all her life in the same county. She has lived in her present home more than 20 years, has an annual income of about \$2,000, and relies heavily on Social Security, with personal savings and investments as her second means of support.

Her greatest problems are low income, poor health, lack of transportation, and housing — in that order.

The thing that makes her feel most useful is being able to take care of herself, and, secondly, doing volunteer work.

The Committee on Aging says that Maine should develop a "philosophy of aging," and hopes that this can be accomplished at the Sept. 23 day-long meeting of business and civic leaders at Augusta. Because there is no philosophy of aging, the report contends, "our older people find they live almost as a minority group."

Some of the recommendations the Committee On Aging has made as the basis for possible legislation are:

- Greatest stress should be placed on the age 45-65 worker by the Maine Employment Security Commission, and the commission should take greater advantage of federal programs to help these workers find suitable employment.

- Improvements in social security benefits should be considered, such as deleting the present policy of granting only an 80 percent benefit to a widow and allowing the full benefit entitled by her husband; exempting workers age 62 and over, as well as their employers, from social security taxes; increasing the amount of earnings a social security beneficiary may have before receiving reduced payments; adjusting social security benefits to reflect the current cost of living.

- Old Age Assistance benefits should be raised and adjusted by a cost-of-living index in the future. The property-tax lien for recipients should be abolished and increases in Social Security not deducted from the Old Age Assistance payment.

- Reduced utility rates should be considered, and no-deposit policies should be initiated for the elderly by gas, electric, and telephone companies in Maine.

Health needs discussed

- Immediate increases in extended-care, intermediate care, and boarding homes should take place to meet the health needs of the aged.

- State standards for nursing homes should be upgraded.

- A Maine health facilities authority should be established to guarantee loans for health facilities, grant low-cost loans, and construct and operate the facilities in geographic areas of drastic public need presently neglected by the private sector.

- Changes in presently inequitable sections of Medicare and Medicaid should be encouraged by Maine officials, and the program should be enlarged to include dental eye, and hearing care, as well as the cost of prescription drugs.

- Transportation systems should be improved, and new ones developed to overcome the present immobility and inaccessibility of the elderly to community, social, and medical facilities.

- Preretirement courses and counseling should be undertaken by Maine educational institutions, businesses, and labor unions to better prepare today's workers for future years.

- Increased funding should be made available to the Maine Department of Health and Welfare to supply the staff and facilities needed to better serve Maine elderly citizens

PART 2

SELECT PROBLEMS

OF

OLDER PEOPLE

Curtis calls for 'meaningful' tax relief for state's aged

(AP) — The time "has clearly come for the state to provide a meaningful tax relief program," for its senior citizens, Gov. Curtis said Monday.

During a regular news conference, the Democratic incumbent released a study done by the Maine Committee on Aging on a tax relief law enacted by the 104th legislature in 1969. The committee's questionnaires were answered from 54.5 per cent of the state's municipalities.

in light of the clear need which the elderly have for property tax relief, the time has clearly come for the state to provide a meaningful tax relief program," Curtis observed.

The governor said he would ask the 105th legislature next year to finance a relief package from the general fund, aimed at helping senior citizens with their present tax burdens and any future increases.

"It should be available to the elderly who rent their homes as well as to those who own

them. . . It should not have any lien provision at all," he added.

In other matters, Curtis said most voters he has encountered on the campaign trail are concerned with the economy, property tax increases and rising educational costs, in that order.

The governor said he isn't yet ready to support a program of state revenue sharing with municipalities, but favors uniform administration of the property tax and a revised school subsidy law aimed at helping the poor communities.

9/15/70
Portland, Me., Evening Express.

Curtis Wants More Aid For Elderly

TAXES

Maine Times 9/18/70

relief never came

Portland, Me., Press Herald 9/15/70

Tax Relief For Aged Vital Right Now, Curtis Declares

The Lewiston (Maine) Daily Sun 9/15/70

GOV. CURTIS IS PUSHING TAX RELIEF FOR ELDERLY

Bangor Daily News, 9/28/70
A Merciful Idea

Searsport

To The Editor:
I have been reading Gov. Curtis's proposal about a property tax relief for the elderly. I think it is a wonderful and a merciful idea and only hope it is not one of those election year promises.

Most people of 65 or more have no steady employment and usually have a limited income. But they have their little property, acquired with much sacrifice. There also are heavy medical expenses at that age, depleting their already slim income.

These people have weathered several wars and depressions and should be able to retire in peace and not have to foot the bills for all kinds of extras and luxuries for schools etc. The demands from Town and City government gets bigger each year.

I don't think all the pampering that is handed to the youngsters nowadays, will make them better citizens, rather it tends to make them soft and more demanding. Just look at the present day's occurrences. I wonder if they will be able to live through a depression, with all the frustrations and no income at all.

So Mr. Governor, try to give we elderly a break too. We deserve it.

Old And Overtaxed

The "tax relief" law passed by the 104th Legislature is not working and should be replaced by a more meaningful law to help Maine's elderly property owners according to the latest report of the Governor's Committee on Aging.

The law permits elderly home owners to apply to municipal officials for a waiver of increases in their property taxes, but only at the cost of having a tax lien placed on their homes. Governor Kenneth M. Curtis, among others, denounced it at the time as an insult to the elderly, and the new report also shows it to be a failure.

Curtis said that a questionnaire was sent to the chief administrative officer in each of the 495 municipalities of the state, asking how many inquiries had been received from the elderly, how many applications were filed, how many approved, and why inquiries were not followed by applications.

Responses showed that of 785 inquiries received, only 95 were followed by applications. The principal reason, according to 87.6 percent of the municipal officers responding, was the tax lien provision.

Of the 95 applications, 75 were approved, for a total of \$4,564 in tax relief.

"When we consider the fact that there are approximately 75,000 elderly home owners in Maine, we see the pitiful inadequacy of this property tax relief program," Curtis said. He will recommend to the 105th Legislature a program that would provide for relief from existing property tax burdens as well as increases, would be available to the elderly who rent as well as to those who own their own homes, and would involve a cash refund paid from the state's general fund, without any tax lien provision.

A Conference on Aging will be held at Blaine House Wednesday, Sept. 23, when this and other problems of the elderly brought out in the committee's full report will be discussed.

Senior Citizen Needs Outlined

AUGUSTA (AP) — Transportation ranks with income and medical care as a primary concern of Maine's senior citizens, Gov. Curtis said in a statement presented here Friday.

"We can develop the most effective medical care and recreation programs imaginable, but they will serve little purpose if the elderly citizens who need them cannot find a way to get to the scene.

"Transportation is the vital connecting link," said The Democratic governor in remarks presented by an aide to the Kennebec County Council of Senior Citizens.

Curtis noted state welfare officials have hired a consultant to design a demonstration transportation project which would give the elderly convenient access to medical and dental services, and to recreation and shopping facilities.

"This project plan, once designed," Curtis continued, "will

be submitted to the federal government, which has funds for both demonstration projects in this area and for operating costs."

If the demonstration project is successful, it could be used as a model for senior citizen transportation programs throughout the state, the governor's statement added.

9/19/70
Portland, Me., Press Herald,

Transportation Vital To Senior Citizens: Curtis

9/19/70
MORNING SENTINEL, Saturday,

Elderly Need Transportation, Declares Curtis

Kennebec Journal, Augusta, Saturday, Sept. 19, 1970

Transportation needs rival income, medical troubles

AP) — Transportation ranks with income and medical care as a primary concern of Maine's senior citizens, Gov. Curtis said in a statement presented here Friday.

"We can develop the most effective medical care and recreation programs imaginable, but they will serve little purpose if the elderly citizens who need them cannot find a way to get to the scene.

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ficials have hired a consultant to design a demonstration transportation project which would give the elderly convenient access to medical and dental services, and to recreation and shopping facilities.

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If the demonstration project is successful, it could be used as a model for senior citizen transportation programs throughout the state, the governor's statement added.

Transportation Need Cited

AUGUSTA — The primary concerns of Maine's senior citizens include transportation, Gov. Curtis said Friday. Medical and recreational programs for the elderly will serve little purpose if the citizens who need them can't get to them, he said in remarks presented by an aide to the Kennebec County Council of Senior Citizens.

Portland, Me., Evening Express, 9/19/70

Funds For Older Citizens Sought

AUGUSTA (AP)—Gov. Curtis says a plan designed to provide transportation to get the state's elderly to medical and recreational facilities will be submitted for federal funding.

"We can develop the most effective medical care and recreation programs imaginable, but they will serve little purpose if the elderly citizens who need them cannot find a way to get to the scene," Curtis said Friday.

The governor told the Kennebec County Council of Senior Citizens that state welfare officials have hired a consultant to design the transportation program.

Curtis said transportation ranks with income and medical care as a primary concern of Maine's senior citizens.

Kennebec Journal 9/19/70

80,000 Maine elderly without driver license and no transportation

By JEAN HILDEBRAND

Eighty thousand elderly in Maine are without driver's licenses and have no other transportation, Robert Frates of the Community Services Division of the State Health and Welfare Department, said Wednesday.

"The problem has us baffled," he said. The department has contracted Eseo Research, Inc. of Portland to help them dream up a solution. After talking to experts in the transportation business and learning what other states are doing, the researchers expect to set up a pilot project encompassing a region of Maine. No alternatives are available as yet.

Elderly are discouraged from renewing their licenses by their fears of failing the test and by the slowness with which the motor vehicle department gives exams and issues licenses, says Frates.

He said that they think they will fail the eye test and they

become anxious and may give up during the several weeks or months they may have to wait after one license expires before they get another one. Frates said, "There is often a four to six week wait before the driving test is administered."

Many elderly are reluctant to drive or to carry passengers for fear their insurance rate will rise. They think that if they have even a small accident, their insurance will be cancelled, Frates said. Then chances are slim of their being reinsured. Their fears are reinforced if they read the Sept. 30 Wall Street Journal which reported that the Nationwide Insurance Co. is no longer insuring automobiles because there is little profit in it.

Some of the ills from which the elderly suffer cannot be remedied unless the shortage of transportation is eased. "If they have no transportation, they cannot get to health care or to the drug store," Frates said.

Plight Of The Elderly

The concern displayed by Gov. Kenneth M. Curtis for the state's aging population is well known. Some time ago he established a task force that only recently drew a detailed picture of Maine's elderly folk, where and how they lived, their means of subsistence, and what the state should do to help them live out their years in a more comfortable way.

The governor says the time has come to write a tax program for the elderly removing some of the inequities under which they suffer. Only three states have a higher proportion of their population 65 and over, and in Maine the percentage has risen from 8 per cent a relatively short time ago to more than 12 per cent, or one out of every eight residents.

Their situation would be better, since the great majority are persons of limited means, if they were not being hit by inflation and, if home owners, by a rising level of local property taxation. At the last regular session of the legislature, Rep. Kathleen W. Goodwin of Bath recognized the crisis and introduced a bill giving tax relief at the municipal level to home-owners over 65 with an income of \$3,000 or less. She came within eight votes of seeing her bill passed, but conservatism triumphed, and the Republicans mutilated it by giving the old folks property tax relief at the expense of seeing state tax liens slapped on their homes.

The criticism we made of this harsh law at the time is borne out by the findings of the gov-

ernor's study group. The elderly have made 785 inquiries about the new law, but only 85 applications were actually made, and only 75 granted, averaging \$60 each.

If this is taxation relief, we would like to see Republican candidates defend it during the current election campaign, against a background of 130,000 Maine people 65 and over, many thousands of whom own their homes. If there are any rights left in this country, surely the elderly have a right to keep their domiciles as long as they can do so. For the majority it is their chief possession, which they hope to pass on to their sons and daughters, not to be seized by the town after death and sold to satisfy a picayunish abatement on their property taxes.

So the figures show that few are willing to take a chance under this hard-hearted law, and the governor is right to draw the assumption that the situation calls for realistic tax relief for the elderly. If Rep. Goodwin is re-elected she will re-introduce her own bill, while Gov. Curtis is also preparing a package measure to be financed from the General Fund to help meet financial distress among the state's aging population.

The old days are gone, when grandparents, parents and grandchildren lived under the same roof, and we are certainly no better off for the change. Many civilizations much older than our own venerate the elderly, instead of isolating them, and the least the state can do is to help them live out their years in decency and dignity.

PART 3

BLAINE HOUSE

CONFERENCE ON AGING

STATEMENTS

OF

SPEAKERS

Blaine House parley on aging to be Sept. 23

Portland Evening Express
9/18/70

Curtis To Speak At Aging Parley

AUGUSTA (AP)—Gov. Curtis is scheduled to deliver the keynote address next Wednesday at the Blaine House Conference on Aging which is expected to draw delegates from throughout the state.

A featured speaker at the conference will be John B. Martin, special assistant to the President for aging. The conference is a prologue to the 1971 White House Conference on Aging and is the culmination of nine months preparation by the Governor's Committee on Aging and five community-level task forces.

Aging conference

(AP) — John B. Martin, special assistant to the President for aging, will speak at next Wednesday's Blaine House Conference on Aging, Gov. Curtis said Thursday.

The conference, called by the Democratic governor, is a prologue to the 1971 White House Conference on Aging and is the culmination of nine months preparation by the Governor's Committee on Aging and five community level task forces.

Curtis will deliver the keynote address at the morning session of the conference in the state armory. Delegates from throughout the state are scheduled to attend the meeting.

Waterville Sentinel 9/18/70

Conference On Aging Planned In Augusta

Nixon Aide Speaker At State Confab On Aging

AUGUSTA (AP) —John B. Martin, special assistant to the President for aging, will speak at next Wednesday's Blaine House Conference on Aging, Gov. Curtis said Thursday.

The conference, called by the Democratic governor, is a prologue to the 1971 White House Conference on Aging and is the culmination of nine months preparation by the Governor's Committee on Aging and five community level task forces.

Curtis will deliver the keynote address at the morning session of the conference in the state armory. Delegates from throughout the state are scheduled to attend the meeting.

Portland Press Herald 9/18/70

Kennebec Journal 9/18/70

Winston
Daily Sun

Friday, September 18

MARTIN TO SPEAK AT AGING SESSION

AUGUSTA (AP) — John B. Martin, special assistant to the President for aging, will speak at next Wednesday's Blaine House Conference on Aging, Gov. Curtis said Thursday. The conference, called by the Democratic governor, is a prologue to the 1971 White House Conference on Aging and is the culmination of nine months preparation by the Governor's Com-

mittee with the Dept. of Health and Welfare, have been at work identifying senior citizens' problems and preparing recommendations for action. These task forces have met over 55 times, with the participation of large numbers of older people. More than 250 Task Force volunteers have helped over 2,000 people fill out detailed questionnaires about their needs and living conditions. These needs will be discussed at this conference.

During the past eight months five regional Task Forces on Aging and the Maine Committee on Aging, in conjunction

Kennebec Journal, Augusta,
Tuesday, Sept. 22, 1970

Conference Wednesday on Me. aging

The elderly person who lives on a twisting rural road without a car probably will not be at the Blaine House Conference on Aging.

Five Task Forces on the Governor's Committee on Aging will meet in the Blaine House Conference Wednesday at the Augusta Armory. The conference will determine priorities from among the recommendations of the recently released Report of the Governor's Committee on Aging. These priorities will be presented to Maine's 105th legislature and will be contributed to a national policy of aging at the 1971 White House Conference on Aging.



1970

**BLAINE HOUSE
CONFERENCE ON AGING**

A Maine Prologue to the
1971 White House Conference on Aging

Host

Governor Kenneth M. Curtis

Sponsored in Cooperation With

Maine Committee on Aging

and

Services for Aging

Maine Department of Health and Welfare

MAINE TASK FORCES ON AGING

PROGRAM

<p>Northern</p> <p>Mr. George Beale, Chairman 17 Hammond Street Caribou, Maine</p> <p>Central</p> <p>Mr. Gerald Kinney, Chairman 39 Summer Street Rockland, Maine</p>	<p>Eastern</p> <p>Mr. Floyd Scammon, Chairman 116 North Main Street Orono, Maine</p> <p>Western</p> <p>Mr. Harold Collins, Chairman Box 544 Wilton, Maine</p>
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Southwestern

Miss Mary Worthley, Chairman
West Lebanon, Maine

* * * * *

Maine Committee on Aging

Dominic Giordano, Chairman

Maine Department of Health and Welfare

Dean Fisher, M. D., Commissioner

Services for Aging

Richard W. Michaud, Director

9:00 A. M.	REGISTRATION AND COFFEE	
10:00 A. M.	WELCOME	Dean Fisher, M. D. Master of Ceremonies
10:15 A. M.	OPENING ADDRESS	Kenneth M. Curtis Governor State of Maine
10:45 A. M.	REPORTS OF TASK FORCES ON AGING Robert A. Frates, Moderator	
		Northern Task Force – Mrs. Helen Sweet Eastern Task Force – Mr. Floyd Scammon Central Task Force – Mr. Gerald Kinney
11:15 A. M.	RECESS FOR COMPLIMENTARY LUNCH	
1:00 P. M.	KEYNOTE ADDRESS	John B. Martin Special Assistant to President for Aging
1:30 P. M.	REMARKS	Dominic Giordano
1:40 P. M.	REPORTS OF TASK FORCES ON AGING continued	
		Western Task Force – Mr. Harold Collins Southwestern Task Force – Miss Mary Worthley
2:00 P. M.	COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR	
2:30 P. M.	ADOPT CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS	
3:00 P. M.	ADJOURNMENT	

Address of
GOVERNOR KENNETH M. CURTIS
to the
Blaine House Conference on Aging
September 23, 1970

Today we are participating in a unique event. We have come together from all parts of our State to focus on a subject that, until recently, was seldom discussed in an organized way, or with a true sense of urgency.

Most of us knew, from personal experience or observation, that there were elderly citizens who suffered from isolation, inadequate health care, or deteriorating housing. We knew of elderly citizens who were forced to abandon their homes because of rising property taxes, or who, faced with sadly inadequate incomes, were deprived of essential food and medicine. But, as so often happens, too few saw beyond the specific case to the pattern of neglect and misery that was blighting the lives of thousands and thousands of our elderly citizens.

What caused this blindness? I am sure the reasons are many and complex. We learned how to prolong life before we understood that our mobile, technologically advanced society had altered living styles that once brought comfort to the elderly. Children and grandchildren who once remained close to home now moved far away. Tradesmen and shop keepers who could once retain some degree of economic independence throughout their lives were now defeated by big business. Deprived of family support, no longer self-sustaining, the elderly were forced to look for help from a society that simply did not understand how much it had changed.

In seeking this help, the elderly were handicapped by lack of visibility and organization. Living alone or as isolated couples, often without transportation, many of the elderly simply were not seen. And in a society so preoccupied with the problems of youth, there was little opportunity for the problems of aging, less glamorous and loud, to claim the public's attention. Under such circumstances, only the elderly themselves, organized to dramatize their cause, could shatter the public's indifference. But the organization simply did not exist.

But all this is now changing. Because of the organizing work of state officials and Community Action Programs, and because of the efforts of leaders within the elderly community, the elderly of Maine are becoming a cohesive, visible force for social action. Whereas in the past legislative programs to assist the elderly have not received the support they deserve, I predict that the 105th Legislative Session, beginning in January, will witness a broad-based drive for legislative programs to improve the lot of our elderly citizens.

STATEMENT OF GOVERNOR KENNETH M. CURTIS

This upcoming legislative session should be very much on our minds as we meet here today. Indeed, when I called for this Blaine House Conference in November of 1969, I indicated I was doing so for two reasons: first, to prepare Maine's contribution for the 1971 White House Conference on Aging which Commissioner Martin will lead, and secondly, to develop public support for legislative proposals affecting the elderly that might be presented to the 105th Legislature. You will be considering such programs today, most of which are described in the Steps for Maine's Elderly report.

I wish to say a special word about this report. It is, in my judgment, one of the finest and most challenging studies yet prepared by a state committee or agency. One editorial writer described it as "a brilliant, astonishing and uncomfortable document." Those words are well-chosen. With its careful presentation of statistics on income, housing, medical care, employment and population trends, and with its careful analysis of those statistics, this report offers the first accurate picture of the living conditions of Maine's elderly population. That picture, to say the least, is a disturbing one, and that is precisely why this report is so important. It moves us beyond the specific case and proves that for every elderly person we know who skimps on food or lives alone, there are thousands of others in the same situation. I wish to thank publicly the Committee on Aging, the members of the regional task forces, the consultants, the federal officials, and the state employees who put Steps for Maine's Elderly together. Your study has accomplished the public awakening that is so badly needed. You have performed a great service for all of us.

But your report, as I have suggested, does more than just describe a problem. It also offers solutions, many of which you will consider today as part of your action program for the elderly. I will be anxious to see that program, and, so far as possible, act upon it. However, speaking quite candidly, we will not accomplish at this legislative session, or at any session, all that we should do for the elderly. There are great demands, from many sources, on the State's revenues. Difficult judgments on priorities will have to be made. Those judgments will not always conform to your wishes. But these hard realities should not deter you from adopting an ambitious action program which, element by element, we can achieve.

Speaking only for myself, and knowing that my judgments will be modified by what you recommend today, I do see certain directions, based on my study of the report, in which we should move. The need for property tax relief for the elderly is urgent. As I indicated in a report issued last week, the State's present property tax relief law, with its obnoxious lien provision, is a complete failure. We must replace that law during the 105th Legislative Session with a law that provides the elderly with relief from existing property tax burdens as well as property tax increases. That law should be available to the elderly who rent their homes as well as to those who own them, and it should involve a cash refund to the elderly paid from the State's general fund. It should have absolutely no lien provision at all. I recommended such a property tax relief program to the last Legislature, and I shall recommend this program once again to the 105th Legislature.

STATEMENT OF GOVERNOR KENNETH M. CURTIS

At the federal level we must continue to press for changes in the social security laws. Widows who now receive only 80% of the husband's benefit should receive the full benefit. Because of the heavy impact of inflation on the fixed incomes of the elderly, social security should be adjusted annually to reflect the current cost of living, with benefits being raised in a specific dollar amount.

Another program that is crucial to the incomes of our elderly, Old Age Assistance, must also be reformed. Although Maine's monthly Old Age Assistance payments have increased almost 24% during the past four years, our level of payments is still very inadequate. I strongly support the legislation now before Congress that would raise the level of Old Age Assistance benefits to a minimum of \$110 a month and increase the amount of federal reimbursement to the State. I also believe that the claim against the estate provision must be removed from our Old Age Assistance program. It is a discriminatory provision which has no place in a humane system of laws.

In the area of health care, the Steps for Maine's Elderly report has identified a drastic shortage of extended and intermediate health care facilities for elderly patients. This shortage, in turn, contributes to the serious overcrowding of our acute care hospitals. As a solution, the report recommends the establishment of a Maine Health Facilities Authority which, through the sale of revenue bonds, could make loans for the construction of extended and intermediate care facilities. This approach has worked successfully in New York State, and it should be considered here.

We must improve the coverage of our food assistance programs, despite the substantial gains that have been made in the last two years. At the present time the donated commodities program is the most widely used in Maine. This program does pose food variety and distribution problems, but, for the short term at least, we should encourage its expansion to meet immediate needs. At the same time we should explore increasing use of the food stamp program.

Another community service which must be expanded is the homemaker program. Many of our elderly citizens who live in their own homes need help with house-keeping chores, meal preparation or diet supervision. If they receive this help, they can avoid institutions, with all the painful adjustments and expenses such institutions involve. As of February 1970, there were only 57 professionally trained homemaker aids in the State, far too small a number. We must increase their number through the pooling of federal, state and local resources. Such an investment can mean long-term savings and much greater comfort for the elderly.

Housing, as we all know, is a serious problem for all segments of our population, including the elderly. The State Housing Authority is now at work on rent supplement and interest supplement programs which will encourage the rehabilitation of deficient housing and the construction of private housing available to the elderly. Technical assistance is also being provided to local housing authorities. Efforts in this area must be accelerated and expanded.

STATEMENT OF GOVERNOR KENNETH M. CURTIS

Finally, in the field of transportation, our elderly citizens face particularly acute problems. Well over 50% of them do not own automobiles or do not have driver's licenses. Our State, principally because of its population distribution, does not have a well-developed public transportation system. Many of the elderly therefore find it almost impossible to get to the source of medical care, food distribution, recreation, companionship, or retail purchases. In an effort to cope with this problem, as I announced last week, the Department of Health and Welfare has hired a consultant to design a demonstration transportation project which would give the elderly convenient access to a wide variety of services. Once designed, this plan will be submitted to the federal government, which has funds for both demonstration projects in this area and for operating costs. If the demonstration project proved successful, it would be used as a model for senior citizen transportation programs throughout the State.

These are, in summary, some of the needs that I see. There are many others I could mention, and there are many others which you will probably emphasize today. I look forward to receiving your recommendations and I look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead on meeting the problems of our elderly citizens. Our participation in today's Blaine House Conference emphasizes our commitment to that goal. Having come this far, having awakened to the true dimensions of the problems, we must now transform that commitment into programs that, at long last, assure the comfort and dignity of our elderly population.

Statement of
MRS. GEORGE SWEET, HOULTON
ON BEHALF OF THE AROOSTOOK TASK FORCE ON AGING
Blaine House Conference on Aging September 23, 1970

To Our Governor, Kenneth M. Curtis of the State of Maine
Members of Our Law Making Body of Maine, Guests, and Fellow Citizens

As a member of the Task Force on Aging from Aroostook County, I wish to submit the following report as found on the Medicaid Plan and Old Age Assistance.

Aroostook County is as large as the States of Connecticut and Rhode Island combined. The elderly population is widely scattered. Many people have to travel for miles to centers where groceries, clothing, doctors, dentists, and hospitals are located. Cost of existence is very high. Cost of heating oil is approximately 2¢ per gallon higher than in other areas of the State. Since the winters are longer and colder this adds a double burden. Food, on the average runs 3¢ on the dollar higher in Aroostook. Cost of maintenance of both home and car are more expensive due to cold winter weather.

61% of the elderly in Aroostook County have health problems and earn roughly \$1,700 per year.

Since all of these things make the situation more crucial let us look at a couple of examples in particular. Though there are many areas of need in regard to health and health services for the elderly, we must look first to the availability of funds for these needs.

The Maine Medicaid Plan operates in such a way that for every \$3.00 that Maine raises, the Federal Government provides \$7.00. In other words, 70% of the total cost is paid by the Federal Government.

If more funds could be found within the State of Maine, the program of Medicaid could be expanded to cover Drugs, Dental Programs, Eye and Hearing Services. Each of these areas need additional coverage and are of extreme importance to Senior Citizens.

Since 16% of all health care costs of the elderly are for drugs and Medicare covers none of these and the Medicaid Program barely scratches the surface, it seems that we need to re-examine our priorities.

At least 80% of all Senior Citizens use prescription drugs, so it only makes sense, that more preventative or restorative medicines would decrease the total of maintaining Maine's Senior Citizens. If more money were available for drugs outside of State Hospitals and Nursing Homes then perhaps some of the people who are in these facilities would be able to return to normal existances.

Now let us move on to the area of dental problems within our State. It is possible for Maine to undertake a dental project for the elderly and for the majority of the cost to be born by the Medicaid Program. It is estimated that roughly 40,000 Senior Citizens in Maine have not seen a dentist in the past 5 years and that 25,000 of those have never been to a dentist. Increased Medicaid

benefits and the possible creation of Mobile Care Units would begin to alleviate this problem. In the area of Eye Care and Hearing Services there is also a tremendous need. The need in this case is once again a preventative step. Problems with eyes and ears that are allowed to become critical in many cases create a need for hospitalization. If the Medicaid Program could be expanded to cover these items then once again the massive expense of hospitalization might be avoided. This area of service also lends itself to the idea of Mobile Clinics for which funding is also available. It is important that we keep in mind that for every \$10.00 of service, Maine contributes only \$3.00. Medicaid at this point benefits only those on welfare, but the number who are in need and unable to pay is obviously far greater.

Let us shift our attention to the area of Old Age Assistance. A most significant problem in relation to Old Age Assistance is its tax lien requirement. The recommendation to raise payments under Old Age Assistance will be carried out should Congress pass the provision of the "Family Assistance Act of 1970." This legislation proposes raising the level of benefits to a minimum of \$110. a month on July 1, 1971, and will upgrade the amount of Federal reimbursements to the State. State wide support should be generated to back this important piece of legislation. Raising this minimum to \$110. per month will provide significant help to those who are presently in the poorest economic straits. The present levels of Old Age Assistance are unrealistic in light of the needs of today's elderly. Minimum benefits at the state level should be raised to more closely conform to the subsistence of the aged. In our opinion, this subsistence is that defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of \$1,720. per year for each individual and about \$3,000. for an elderly couple.

A third aspect of this problem lies with the sliding scale of benefits between Old Age Assistance and Social Security. When Social Security benefits are raised or amended to increase coverage then Old Age Assistance is lowered for the recipient. This means that once in an economic bind the elderly person is never able to be free of debt.

The major criticism of property liens is that they result in an extremely heavy inheritance or estate tax on lower income groups in our society. A wealthy individual may pass on substantial sums to his heirs, thanks to federal and state exemptions that may be bequeathed tax free. In addition our tax laws permit every other generation to be omitted from estate tax if the heir is willing to transfer his inheritance to his children's children. Low income families however, must pay an extremely high inheritance tax, possibly 100% on property inherited from an Old Age Assistance recipient, if they happen to reside in a state with property liens. The property tax lien, in essence means that the poor must pay inheritance tax received from an Old Age Assistance recipient while the richer elderly can avoid this tax by passing their property on to their children.

Not only does the property tax lien weigh heavily on the poor, but has also been used as a method of intimidation and coercion on the elderly. The aged have derived an image of a state government eager and willing to take their property, assets and other belongings merely because of the existence of the tax lien provision.

We in Aroostook County realize only too well how far reaching are the problems for Senior Citizens. Though we have mentioned only two problems -- Medicaid and Old Age Assistance in detail we feel that there are many other areas which also need immediate attention.

Thank you.

Statement of
MR. FLOYD G. SCAMMON, ORONO
Chairman, Eastern Maine Task Force on Aging
to the
Blaine House Conference on Aging, September 23, 1970

TRANSPORTATION

Governor Curtis, Members of the Committee on Aging, People from the Health and Welfare Department, my associates in the Task Force ladies and gentlemen.

My assignment for this conference reminds me of the case studies which we had in the industrial world. These consisted of problems to which there were no answers in the book.

My first problem, today, is in the area of transportation, and the thought comes to me that if the State takes away a persons right to drive a care, because of old age or physical defects, then the State should take some responsibility for their transportation needs for essential services. When I say State I mean we the people.

To quote from page 211 of our book 'Steps for Maine's Elderly' "the present policy of eye tests for those drivers over 65 and driving tests for drivers 75 and over should be continued. However among the elderly there is great "fear" of these tests and efforts must be undertaken to allay these fears and to emphasize the benefit and protection such tests offer. Actually, the eye test brings a vision clinic to those age 65 and over and should be conducted as such. The tests are provided free at state offices or taken from an approved examiner. The stress should be placed on referral to appropriate agencies for correction of defects and vision problems rather than the revocation of licenses."

More consideration should be given the feelings of elderly people who have to take a test in order to continue to drive. To keep them waiting and unsure for weeks and months without their knowing anything about what is going on is punishment which they do not deserve. In my own case it was in March that I applied for my license, my birthday is April 24th, and it was September 3rd before I received it. All this time I was on the uneasy seat, although I was in good health and had a record of fifty-four years of driving without a serious accident. Twice my letters to the Secretary of State went unanswered and I was without a drivers permit for several weeks.

On page 218 we read "Of all problems facing elderly people in Maine, transportation is the one of paramount importance."

To quote from the August 3rd issue of Time Magazine, "But there is little socializing among the rural aged who often subsist on pittances of \$60 a month, and become even more isolated as public buses disappear from the highways, cutting off their life lines to clinics, stores and friends."

STATEMENT OF FLOYD G. SCAMMON

The ownership of automobiles by the elderly is the lowest, percentage wise than any other age group of driving age.

Public transportation offers little help because many of Maine's elderly live in rural areas where there are no public conveyences.

The Administration on Aging, and other governmental agencies recognize that transportation is one of the most pressing problems facing older people. I was surprised to learn that "funds exist for research and demonstration projects in this area, and that operating funds exist for the cost incurred in actual implementation of transportation for senior citizens. What are we waiting for?

Let us get on with a demonstration project, or several of them, where we will attempt to learn what can be done by establishing a bus service on a trial basis. Taking a trading center such as Ellsworth, Machias, or Farmington. Let a bus make two trips a day, each week day, covering a different area around the center so that senior citizens who live in that trading area could have transportation into town, time to do their various errands, and a return ride home at least once a week. It probably would be found that others besides senior citizens would want to ride these buses and a reasonable fare would help defray the cost. This might complicate a government subsidy.

To make such a system work to the best advantage of the senior citizens the service would have to be, to quote Mary Worthley, "warm and friendly," and many special arrangements worked out such as a card or flag display, aid to the feeble, the intown itinerary etc.

Let us hope that all our State and Federal officials will get their thinking out into the rural areas where the greatest transportation needs of our senior citizens are to be found. In our urban centers there is also need for transportation but it is not as acute in the city as in the country, because taxi service is quite reasonable in the city, but it is definitely prohibitive in the outlying areas..

In either case, we the people should take the responsibility of providing transportation for our elderly citizens who have no way to get to do their errands.

HOUSING

My second subject is housing. This subject will be covered in part, at least, by another speaker, but I must pass along to you some of the thoughts that have come to me during my activities on the task force and also as a member of the Orono Housing Authority.

STATEMENT OF FLOYD G. SCAMMON

Our book, 'Steps for Maine's Elderly,' recognizes that, "their own home is more suitable and less costly than other forms of housing." I believe that no one will quarrel with this statement as far as the happiness of older people is concerned. Whether or not the present home is more suitable, or can be made so, is a question that can only be answered by a study of individual cases.

A poorly constructed building with inadequate heating and lighting equipment can only be made suitable at all by the expenditure of considerable money. Yet the expenditure of such money might well be the most economical as well as the best all around way to provide for a person who has long lived here.

There are many more substantial homes which could be made very acceptable to the elderly who live there by a reasonably small expenditure of money.

Then there are many, once real good homes, which have deteriorated because of the physical or financial inability of the senior citizen to keep it up.

In all such cases, and many more, I have to agree with the book that to make our senior citizens comfortable, according to the standards with which they are familiar, will be the least costly and most satisfactory way to improve the living conditions of those senior citizens who are able to take care of themselves and want to remain at home. I would like to refer again to that phrase according to the standards with which they are familiar.

As a boy, living out in the country, I had a sensitive and highly intelligent aunt who went on a rare visit to some friends who lived in the city, and when she returned she remarked that she was glad to get back to a civilized house. She was, as many are now, used to it and satisfied with outdoor plumbing.

At present I know of no program which can or will provide money for the improvement of a dwelling no matter how indigent the resident may be. Surely something should be done about this and it should have a high priority.

I also agree with the book where it says, "A full time Housing Specialist position should be created at the state level to foster development of housing programs for the elderly."

But in Heavens name let him get away from Augusta long enough to clear his mind of any idea that aid to the elderly must be on a mass basis rather than the meeting of individual needs.

It must be remembered that the State Housing Authority, as well as Municipal Housing Authorities, are no more concerned with the elderly, as such, than with other low income people.

However, there is much in the way of housing that needs to be done for the low income elderly of our rural communities, that can best be done by the State Housing Authority if they can just see beyond the environs of Augusta.

We have all looked forward to this conference. We expected to enjoy it and to learn much from the experience. Now when we return to our local areas let us try to turn this knowledge and experience to good purpose, as we work to improve the quality of living of our senior citizens.

STATEMENT OF FLOYD G. SCAMMON

To work for the establishment of senior citizens centers in your area is a most worthwhile and rewarding service. To make such centers a source of information greatly increases their value.

We read on page 88 in our book that senior citizens centers run second only to Health and Welfare workers as a source of information about assistance programs. I am particularly interested in the possibilities of referral services.

To quote from the AARP news bulletin, "your willingness to offer help in any phase will lead to solutions going beyond merely identifying problems, which in the past, have commanded so much attention."

Let us help ourselves and hope that help for the needs that are beyond our powers will be forthcoming through the efforts of those that we have elected to work for the good of all.

In closing, I want to commend our Governor Curtis for his interest in, and his efforts on behalf of our senior citizens, and I urge you all to give him your full support.

Thank you.

Statement of
MR. GERALD KINNEY, ROCKLAND
Chairman, Central Maine Task Force on Aging
to the
Blaine House Conference on Aging, September 23, 1970

Central Task Force has been very conscious of a number of serious problems people live with. The findings from the survey as recorded in "Steps for Maine's Elderly" and as reported to us indicate that many, many people in our area are both in need of assistance in their homes and at the same time, a large number of people do not know how to become meaningfully involved with their fellows. The regional abstract of the survey indicates 46% of our elderly list as a major concern of theirs, the necessity to feel needed and useful. While these two percentages may not involve the same people, they probably involve a large number of the same people.

We noted in few areas of our region where a person has been hired to coordinate, stimulate and organize activities within and beyond the Senior Centers; the morale of people over 65 has been increased and a larger percentage of our senior population has been activated. Most centers have met needs and are doing a good job. In some other areas with no coordination we have not reached the isolated and lonely. In a few senior centers, activities are falling apart, in some others no real rounded program has developed. Centers in close proximity to each other not only have too little contact, but sometimes work at cross purposes. Petty frictions divide and at times hopelessly frustrate action.

It is imperative to have paid coordinators.

Regional coordinators under the Community Services Division of the Department of Health and Welfare would tie together the activities which seniors can do and stimulate activities, particularly in reaching those who are lonely and isolated. With such an approach, 10 people would work in 10 areas set up on a social use grid. Persons would be hired to bring to people the information about available services.

There are many persons who, because of geographic and physical limitations have few options, in terms of their time, effort and energy. Regional coordinators would provide for them the active means of interpreting hope and purpose into specific actions.

The couple living on the second floor in a stove heated apartment need to know that there is available within the community another elderly person who has a car and a little more energy and is able to drive them to their doctor's appointment.

The person who because of arthritis can not walk very far needs to know a group meets on Wednesday and the transportation might be provided by others in that group so she could attend.

STATEMENT OF GERALD KINNEY

A woman of seventy years who has a telephone would know a sense of personal worth to have a number of people whom she could call each day, not only to share the basic concerns for every day emergency problems, but also to develop a newer understanding of people; and possibly some friendships might develop.

In short the advantages of a regional coordinator system can be seen by looking at the great variety of activities and the number of people over 65 reached in the few areas of our State that have had or currently have the advantage of this type of activity. We see great need for regional coordinators.

We looked very seriously at health services. 54% of our people indicate health is a problem. The line between health as a medical need and "health as a general need" is hard to define. There are many situations which require hospital, nursing home or boarding home care. In many places there is no facility available and many nursing and boarding homes just cannot provide the quality of care needed. We found many people do not need the expensive institutional care if some services can be brought to them at home.

It costs less to remain home and receive services and the person is better. Homemaker Service needs to be greatly expanded, as does Home Nursing Service. I am thinking of the family who, because a homemaker comes in once a week, can remain in their own home. I am thinking of the elderly lady, who, because Homemaker Service is available does not need to move to a nursing home. I am thinking of the retired gentleman who because of failing eyesight, needs to have a good meal now and then, and some assistance cleaning his apartment. Homemakers have proved their worth. We must improve the volume of Homemaker Service. According to one source, in February of this year, there were 57 professionally trained homemaker aides within our State, that is quite a load when you consider the 118,000 people over 65. Homemaker Service could be expanded to include other kinds of services beyond dietary, planning and home cleaning, to include some kind of assistance in home maintenance. This would be extremely valuable. 46.6% indicated help is needed with yard work and snow removal, 45.8% of the people in our area indicate home repairs, many of these were minor but are impossible to handle by themselves. Looking, also, at the ways in which people are living: we find it is nothing short of tragic that individuals, in need of either diagnostic, preventive, or maintenance type of home nursing service, find it impossible to receive care.

Shocking news! Soon a 50% cut in Home Health Care paid by Medicare will be made I do not understand this. Only 2% of Medicare costs are currently Home Health visits. If money is to be saved what a tragic place to cut! This will further deny desperately needed services to the elderly in particular, who need health care more than any single age group. This, on top of the restrictive determination on Extended Care Facility coverage and compounded by the withdrawal of many nursing homes from Medicare creates an extremely desperate condition for our elderly who need health services. A person, who because of financial and physical limitations, has to choose between remaining at home with no care and going to a nursing home, if one is available, many times will choose to remain home; as I would. Yet because of the incomplete coverage of home nursing and home health services and extremely limited service offered by some agencies, this is precisely the kind of choice which many people face.

STATEMENT OF GERALD KINNEY

Region III suggests that three things be done:

1. Establishment of a regional coordinator system of ten paid people to work on a personal basis within 10 areas of the State.
2. The number of homemakers be increased (doubled or tripled) so more adequate coverage is possible.
3. Home nursing and Home health agencies be financially encouraged by State assistance, to broaden their scope of service and to provide regional service to all our older people.

Keynote Address by
JOHN B. MARTIN, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR THE AGING
AND U.S. COMMISSIONER ON AGING
TO THE
Blaine House Conference on Aging September 23, 1970*

It is my intention and hope that the White House Conference on Aging in 1971 will serve as a mechanism for change, developing a national policy on aging of benefit to all Americans.

It is particularly fitting to talk about the development of such a national policy in this State noted for the independent spirit and self-reliance of its people. I feel especially at home here in discussing a very important part of the new and greatly-desired policy which we seek - a realization of the abilities of the older Americans to help themselves and to help others.

Today, is a good time as well as a good place to be speaking to older people. This week, beginning last Sunday the 20th, and running through the 26th, hundreds of thousands of older Americans are meeting in local community forums all over the Nation to make known what they see as their most urgent needs and ways they think these needs can be met including the use of skills and experience of the elderly in meeting them. Our last report was that some 3900 of these forums are being held and we expect to receive suggestions and recommendations from more than a million older people attending them to help us prepare the agenda for next year's National White House Conference.

So today, in this appropriate time and place, in talking with you about the White House Conference and about the National Policy on Aging which must come from it, I would like to talk realistically.

To succeed, the Conference must take into account the working patterns of government, the structure of our population, the intensity of competition for resources. If it accommodates to these elements of change, it will produce recommendations which will receive recognition and action at various levels of government. If it fails to do so, its recommendations will gather dust beside other reports whose authors labored long and hard but fruitlessly.

The working patterns of government at this moment are being transformed. There is a change of direction and emphasis in Washington to what the President has called "the New Federalism." That is not just a phrase - it is a concept long needed in a Federal Government overgrown and encrusted with patterns and practices which no longer serve the people. It is a concept which anticipates massive welfare reform, extensive grant consolidation, substantial revenue-sharing with a minimum of strings attached and a new approach to manpower development and training.

* Note: Commissioner Martin may have departed from the prepared text.

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MARTIN

Much needs to be done - there are many problems. They are not easily solved. They will NOT BE SOLVED just by wishing it so. They WILL NOT BE SOLVED even with the best intentions and greatest activity unless the solutions suggested are feasible, possible, and proposed against the background of the resources available in America today.

They cannot of course be solved in Washington. Help must come from the States, the communities, home towns, and from individuals of all ages. The message can go out from the National Capital, -- I'm trying to help send it out today-but the action takes place locally. The jobs are found, the money spent, the meals delivered here - locally. In the Administration on Aging we have printed a little wallet card - a sort of consumer guide for older people. I brought one with me to show you. Some of its advice holds good anywhere -- "stop and think before you sign your name to anything," "don't be fooled by 'low' monthly payments - find out the total," "to know for sure about health 'cures,' check with your doctor or health clinic..." and so on. These are true everywhere but the card becomes really valuable only when the blank lines are filled in with local names and addresses of sources of help and applicable information available close to home.

I have been visiting the home towns of older citizens all over the Nation.

My year and a half in office as Commissioner on Aging has been a year of working with the States -- of seeing progress in services and opportunities for older people in all of them, and new attitudes and interest in aging developing among citizens of all ages.

Today I am proud to be able to say that for the first time in our history every Older American - wherever he may live - has a State agency on aging to represent him and to serve as his advocate...50 States, the District of Columbia, and four territories.

This is particularly important this year as we prepare for the White House Conference on Aging next year. It means that every older man and woman in the Nation will have some representation in that Conference and that all can speak to its deliberations through this channel of communication. We need their ideas and their participation. Centuries ago, Plato - expressing his pleasure in conversing with the aged, said: "They have been over the road that all of us must travel and know where it is rough and difficult, and where it is level and easy."

It has been a year also for initiatives by the Administration in the field of aging. Important, wide ranging, and significant, they include:

The proposal for a \$110 Federal floor for needy older people under the Family Assistance Act. This could lift 600,000 older persons in couple status over the poverty line and bring 1,400,000 single older persons up to 80% of that income level.

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MARTIN

A 15% increase in Old Age and Survivor's Insurance benefits, plus a probable 5% additional increase.

Provision for an automatic cost-of-living adjustment in Old Age and Survivor's Insurance benefits.

Provision for a liberalization of the so-called retirement text.

The proposed Social Services package which lays the groundwork for an integrated network of social services at the local level.

Proposed improvements in Medicare and Medicaid to control costs, and new provisions for group pre-paid medical care.

A Presidential Task Force on Aging report and appointment of a White House working group now considering implementation of recommendations.

Passage of our Older Americans Act Amendments of 1969 which strengthen State plans, make the Foster Grandparent Program permanent, and authorize a new Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). Although no funds have yet been appropriated for RSVP, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare intends to establish one pilot project in each federal region this year.

The calling of and beginning steps toward the 1971 White House Conference on Aging. The 10 years between 1961 when the last White House Conference on Aging was held and the 1971 have been extraordinary years of accelerating change. They are years in which we have reached the conclusion in this country that we don't have to accept things as they are for our older people, that we have the capacity to bring them -- all of them -- out of poverty. We have realized that it will be possible to have the last third of life as satisfying as the first two-thirds. And we have been slowly and steadily building toward that end.

Ten years ago the 1961 White House Conference ended with 600 recommendations of all shapes, sizes, and potential. This time we hope for fewer, urgent and feasible proposals, with our homework done on ways to make them possible. I am not asking that they be less imaginative, less forward-looking or less comprehensive, but let your vision be accompanied by necessary pedestrian endeavors, necessary first steps taken, plans made, preliminary work done. This is what we will be doing in Washington as we move through the various stages of Conference preparation. And we hope this kind of preparation will be made in all the States in these months - as you are beginning here today.

Elliot Richardson, our new, New England Secretary, of Health, Education, and Welfare says of the New Federalism - "We are redefining for our own age the meanings and functions of the Federal system...a task as noble and urgent as that of the Founding Fathers.

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MARTIN

"Certain common themes run through this new departure of government. These are structural reforms designed to make governmental action respond more quickly, more effectively, and more visibly and directly in the areas of greatest human need. In tandem, they rationalize and integrate numerous programs and funding sources and target them comprehensively. At the same time, they are designed to upgrade State and local leadership in its effort to identify and articulate human needs."

Part of the new thrust we have been discussing is a movement toward more comprehensive, more unified, more encompassing programs. The concern now is with results--the achievement of jointly-sought objectives rather than with the distinction between "our" programs and "their" program. We're trying to look at the whole individual in his total life process. In fact, we are making the whole individual the center of our thinking and aim to serve the totality of his needs.

I have never advocated establishment of a large number of new age-segregated services for the old only. Instead, I have asked for assurance that wherever there is a program for people - older people are included in its planning, in its detailed design, and in a fair share of its services and opportunities --) not the least of which is an opportunity to serve.

What Congress is saying to AoA and what the Secretary is saying to me and what I have been and am now trying to do is to reach out in several ways toward opportunities and resources for service to older people far beyond anything the Older Americans Act now affords.

There is new stress on the need to team up with other programs -- with the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Model Cities where we have a close working agreement, with Office of Economic Opportunity as we have done in Foster Grandparents, with the Department of Transportation on workshops and necessary studies, with the Department of Labor on job discrimination and manpower training and within our own Department of Health, Education, and Welfare with the Community Services Administration on social services, with the Rehabilitation Services Administration on rehabilitation, and with the Medical Services Administration and the Social Security Administration on improvements in Medicaid and Medicare.

Tomorrow I will be testifying before the House Committee on Education and Labor on adequate nutrition for older people. Adequate nutrition requires more than food. Older people often lack money to buy proper food, lack information on nutrition, have no way to get to the store or to carry back heavy packages. All these problems exist. But more inhibiting, more tragic, is the loss of desire to prepare a meal that must be eaten alone and in silence. Nearly five million older Americans live alone. For most of them meals have been a social occasion throughout their lives - a time of companionship, families and exchange of ideas. Now alone, it becomes just one more sad hour in the sort of solitary confinement which isolation too often brings to the elderly. So, in the Administration on Aging, we are concerned with the combination of food and friendship. We are seeking extension of opportunities for nourishing meals provided in group settings where people come together for companionship for education, for activity - nourishment of the spirit as well as the body.

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MARTIN

We are concerned also with problems of transportation of older people and anticipate advances in this area with the passage of the pending Urban Mass Transit bill serving all citizens and specifically including older citizens.

As isolated projects - a nutrition program, a transportation fare reduction, a senior center meets only a fragment of needs. But refocused and related, they offer the basis for an all-out attack on isolation itself. This seems to me to be the thinking that must inspire the White House Conference next year.

Equally important for the White House Conference delegates to understand are the implications of the Federal resources constraint. Every study, every projection of future Federal revenue indicates that for the foreseeable future, the demand of programs will far outstrip available resources.

This does not mean delegates must confine their recommendations to ideas which carry no cost. It does mean that:

- 1) the Conference must search for new ways to justify Federal expenditures for the elderly. Arguing that such expenditures are humane will not be effective; other groups can cite the same argument.
- 2) the Conference must be cognizant of the cost-benefit arguments that opponents of increased expenditures for the elderly use. No funds are now available for training persons over the age 44 to read because studies show that the increased earnings of such an individual will not equal the cost of training him. If the field of aging does not confront this type of analysis head-on with studies that illustrate the utility of spending funds on the elderly, then increasingly such analysis will prevail.
- 3) the Conference must show a clear sense of priorities in its recommendations. If the President were to make \$2 billion immediately available for improving the circumstances of the elderly, how would you recommend that such funds be spent? To improve income? If so, through Old Age Insurance or Old Age Assistance? To improve transportation? If so, through fare reduction or point-to-point system? To improve nutrition. To improve housing. To expand the supply of geriatric health services. These are the kinds of choices which delegates will be required to make if the Conference is not to be just another exercise in the passing of pious resolutions.
- 4) the Conference must deal with the youth vs. age controversy. We have seen the growing tendency to pit the young against the old. The myth recurs that the old have more than their fair share of Federal resources despite evidence that when the total expenditures of society for youth and the aged are evaluated, when local expenditures for education and recreation

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MARTIN

are weighed, the accounts balance. Nonetheless, we live in a youth-oriented culture. We are going to advance the cause of the elderly in that culture only by showing a genuine concern for all age levels -- for participation and sharing by the old with the young and the middle aged.

What I am trying to convey is the thought that older people may lose the battle if it becomes a struggle of those over 65 against the balance of our people more than one half of whom will be under 25 in the immediate future. I am suggesting that there is every opportunity for happy inter-age relationships, for a sharing of resources, for common plans for the common good, for housing that includes a fair portion for the elderly, for nutrition programs that benefit both the old and the young and any others who may suffer from malnourishment.

Any mechanism -- be it a mechanism for moving from one part of town to another or a mechanism for social change -- can only achieve its purpose if those who depend on it understand the environment in which it will function. Social policy is not made in a vacuum. Thus, those of us who are planning the White House Conference and those of us who are participating in its deliberations must make ourselves aware of the kinds of issues I have attempted to raise here today.

I am pleased with what I hear of your Older Americans Act program here in Maine.

Your State agency on aging is undertaking an extensive survey of the needs and situations of all Maine's older residents - information of vital importance to the individuals concerned, to the State of Maine, and to us in our Conference deliberations. This is one of the best and most comprehensive analysis I have seen of the needs of older people in any state. It is both thorough and thoughtful. I intend to ask that it be sent to all states as an example of the type of work which can be most useful in planning for the elderly. A major share of the financing of this survey comes from the new Statewide planning, coordination, and evaluation funds made available under the 1969 amendments to the Older Americans Act.

~~One of the most innovative of all our Title V training programs has been its joint project with your Maine State agency working through the York County Council on Aging where older people have been trained for lay leadership in senior clubs and centers. Five new senior centers staffed by these senior citizens, under professional direction, have been established.~~

I am particularly pleased with the programs in the State which help break the vicious cycle of the isolation I spoke of earlier. You are carrying out home visiting, reassurance programs, homemaker and home health aides, meals services, information and referral programs, adult education projects and - to return to our opening theme of independence and self-reliance - to employment programs which have placed several hundred older people in jobs during the past year. And several thousand older Americans in Maine have contributed their services as older volunteers in helping provide this assistance to less-active older people.

We look to you for continuing help as we approach the 1971 Conference.

Statement of
MR. HAROLD COLLINS, WILTON
Chairman, Western Maine Task Force on Aging
to the
Blaine House Conference on Aging, September 23, 1970

INCOME & TAX RELIEF

As we study the position of our elderly Maine citizens with regard to their income, it is of great importance that we understand how Maine's aging population relates to our New England area and the country as a whole.

Reams of figures and statistics have come from various federal, regional and state surveys and charts. I offer a few as pertinent to our income problems in Maine. In all New England States, Maine ranks lowest for its average Social Security monthly benefit. As of December 1969, 75% of those receiving Social Security in Maine get less than \$1440 per year and 30% receive less than \$840 per year. Maine ranks highest in the New England States in the percentage of our aging population receiving under \$85 per month or barely \$1000 a year.

Also, we have the highest percent of the aging in ratio to its population of all the New England States. Our average is 12.1% as compared to the New England average of 10.8% and the even lower national average of 9.6%. 118,000 or 12% of our Maine population are age 65 and older. If we accept the national norm of \$2983 as the minimum income needed by a retired couple and \$1720 as the minimum needed by a single person, our state of Maine falls far below this bare existence standard. About 50% of our elderly Maine citizens have less income than the minimum budget sets as necessary to live on.

It is significant that in the April 1970 survey 54% of our senior citizens rated lack of income as their major and most pressing problem. Alleviation of this one factor would provide, in great measure, real assistance in taking care of many of our other problems. This is particularly relevant to our Maine elderly when we consider that well over half of Social Security recipients indicated Social Security was their main source of income. Without adequate income, the problems of mental and physical health as well as many other difficulties of the aging continue to multiply.

Although we prefer to live in our own homes, inadequate as many of them may be by today's standards, and maintain our independence, it becomes increasingly evident that as taxes and the cost of living continue to rise we are constantly faced with major economic problems. To solve them, many are forced to cut down on necessary food, medicine and health care. In this situation, we may end up with our homes and independence but failing health and vitality are too often the price we pay. To quote from "Steps for Maine's Elderly:" "Perhaps the saddest plight of Maine's senior citizens is that their capacity to improve their own quality of life is greatly decreased and hampered by their much reduced incomes."

STATEMENT OF HAROLD COLLINS

It is a generally recognized fact that the elderly home owner's residence is more suitable and less costly to the state than other forms of housing. Sixty-three percent (63%) of our senior citizens are home owners. For them the property tax consumes a much larger percentage of their meager funds than for any other age group. In order to keep these citizens living in their own homes, tax relief legislation is vital.

The 104th Legislature did pass a tax relief bill for the elderly allowing heads of households with less than \$4000 income some relief but only from the increases in their property tax, however - this cost to the town may be recovered through a tax lien provision. It appears now from the low percentage of the elderly who applied for this relief, refused it when they understood how the tax lien proviso worked. Apparently over 99% of Maine's elderly home owners have not yet benefited from this law. Therefore this law must be considered a failure.

In contrast to the Maine law, Vermont, under the auspices of the State Tax Department, has a plan in operation which allows approximately 7% to be deducted from the homeowner's adjusted income. The cost is borne by the State of Vermont and thus keeps the burden of the tax relief from the cities and towns which are already under a heavy tax load.

Of the several alternatives suggested, some form of tax relief tied to income, but without any lien provisions, seems to offer the greatest advantage to the low income elderly group who most need this relief. Tax relief for the elderly based on income should consider these four points: (1) The bill should include rent relief. (2) By using a percentage of income for either property tax or rent relief, all the elderly who suffer from low incomes would benefit. (3) In all tax relief measures for the elderly, lien provisions should be strictly excluded. (4) To supplement the property or rent tax relief legislation, the elderly should be granted a reduction in utility rates including gas, oil, electricity, telephone, and, where applicable, metered water rates. A 50% reduction in service rates plus elimination of the deposit requirement is a much needed reform.

When asked the question, "Why tax-relief for the elderly?" - John B. Martin, special assistant to the President on aging, answered in a recent issue of Life Magazine: "People ignore the fact that the elderly comprise 10% of the population, but 20% of all the poor." Here in Maine, the elderly comprise 12% of our population. Adequate tax relief in all areas is one way to raise the income of the majority of elderly citizens.

In pondering these words, it might be well to remember that aging is a process that is a daily part of our lives from the moment of birth. We never grow younger chronologically, and barring mischance, everyone will someday be counted among the aging. A careful consideration of the "plight" of many of Maine's aging today followed by meaningful legislation and real assistance in easing our burdens will also benefit those who follow us in the future. Today we are in the vanguard, fighting for recognition of our needs and long awaited reforms. Tomorrow we will relinquish our role to those who follow in our footsteps.

Some unknown author made this profound statement, and I quote, "The test of a people is how they behave toward the old."

Statement of
MISS MARY WORTHLEY, WEST LEBANON
Chairman, Task Force Five on Aging
to the
Blaine House Conference on Aging September 23, 1970

Well I'll tell you about what Task Force V has done. Task Force V covers Cumberland and York counties which have one-third of the older population of Maine. A big group. We have been concerned with the property tax so ably expounded by Mr. Collins. We voted to recommend that this bill be put into Legislature as property tax relief for owners and home renters probably with some income limitations perhaps \$4,000. We voted to recommend that.

Now the issue that we have been deeply concerned with, which we voted to recommend, was the reimbursement of prescription drugs bills through Medicaid which Mrs. Sweet told you about. Older people should have help with their drugs. We attached an income limitation to this. Our Task Force voted to recommend that this be proposed to Legislature.

Now here is a different one: My Task Force was particularly interested in health. These are the things we concentrated on the most. The Massachusetts' Legislature has introduced or passed a bill to establish a Formulary Commission to require physicians to give the generic name as well as the brand name of a drug. The expense here would be markedly different. We voted to recommend this. A copy of this bill can be secured from the Massachusetts' Legislature.

We are concerned with the area of preventive medicine. We thought this should be explored and a system of preventive care be worked out and set up. The beginning measure we recommend, which has already been mentioned, is a mobile clinic for rural regions. We want a pilot project, a mobile clinic to travel through rural regions, perhaps parking in school yards or another central place where people can go for routine tests, such as urine tests for sugar or kidney infection, for blood pressure or for heart checks. So many people in the country, you and I know, who do not go to doctors and doctors do not go to them. We feel this is the best solution for those in the country. These clinics can be manned by a nurse. The screening tests can be done by a nurse, and a follow-up be made, if a doctor's care is essential.

Something of this kind is being tried in Massachusetts right now. Two or three clinics are being parked in factory yards, up in the yard of a big building, state office buildings. All the people in the building file through and a large number of tests are made. It takes 2 or 3 days and check-ups follow. The purpose of course is prevention, the detection of disease. We voted to recommend the mobile clinic be paid for by the Legislature and that at least one be set up in the rural regions.

We realize that, as has been mentioned before, accessory health services are very important to older people. Hearing aids costs so much. Glasses, dental care, foot care, these already exists from some States. The beginning needs to be made here. We voted to recommend this.

We voted to support strongly an increase in homemaker services.

STATEMENT OF MARY WORTHLEY

Many people on my Task Force are concerned about the standards of care in nursing homes. We know there are fine nursing homes in Maine. We know there are fine standards of care in both large nursing homes and small nursing homes. But we all know, you and I, that in many, standards of nursing care vary from poor to terrible and from terrible to horrendous.

This of course is not limited to Maine. A recent article in the Saturday Review said the situation in nursing homes over the country is dismal. However at a meeting of health officials in the southern part of Maine recently there was a member there from the regional office in Boston and this person said to me, while I was telling her about my Older Council, she said I hope above all you do something for the nursing homes in Maine. Now what we believe is needed first is a loud public outcry. Action follows public demands.

Of transportation which is a great problem and a great expense in Maine, we have no real solution for that yet as you can see. Housing has been discussed. We have no real solution for that. I want to tell you two comments about housing.

I go around and talk a great deal and last month I traveled 4,000 miles and spoke to 1,803 people for my Older Council. Older people come up afterwards and tell me their problems and some of them would break your hearts. This older woman came up to me, a fine looking woman, and she said: "I get \$80.00 a month for Social Security. Welfare sends me \$20.00 a month. \$100.00 a month and I do fine, just fine, but I wish I could have an indoor toilet." She said: "I wanted to tell this to someone." Now she is one of hundreds in the State. It seems to me that there should be available somewhere for people with small incomes a small fund for some badly needed repair or badly needed improvement.

Now here is another story. A woman in a restaurant came up to me and she said: "the lens for my bad eyes haven't been changed for 12 years. I can't see out of them. I can't see any longer to read or sew. I've tried welfare, I've tried to get my lenses changed. I earn a little when I can sew, but I can't pay for it myself.

Here's another one. This woman came up to me and she said to me: "I get \$83.00 a month from Social Security and I live on it. Not many could. I make all my own clothes. I burn wood and I don't eat much." Many widowed people in Maine, many women in Maine and of those women over 65, 50% are widows. Many widows are living galant and uncomplaining lives on less than \$100.00 a month.

A second possibility for housing. (This is not a recommendation from my Task Force). It is one that I have read about. A potential for the future is a trailer home. A recent report states that Maine has more than any other New England State. I've seen them as I have traveled through the State. They are nice looking, property around them; why not another solution for older people? To buy a home is beyond the powers of all but a few. It need not be a trailer park getto of which some towns fear. Towns can make suitable safeguards. Mobile trailers can be easily kept up, on one floor, and they are easy to heat and they can be put near the children.

STATEMENT OF MARY WORTHLEY

There is a new feeling in the world today. A feeling that the young have made us recognize more keenly. A feeling that the pursuit of things, the acquisition of possessions has not brought us the kind of quality of enjoyment we expected it would. The meaning that life is fulfilled as somehow escaped us. They are beginning to find as the Bible told us quite some years ago, and my 25 years of experience in working for the people of Maine has told me, that the deepest meaning of life is the fulfillment coming from serving the needs of those who have not the power or the capacity to seek what they need for themselves. The old, the sick, those in nursing homes, in institutions, neglected children - these are our missions, our tasks and our privilege. Here is where life flows.

Seeing these needs pressured on us, several of us have seen the need for a new organization for older people, all people 60 and over. The senior citizens centers are wonderful. They are doing wonderful things. They include about 35,000 citizens. There are 160,000 in Maine who are 60 and over. The other organizations that work for older people - the NRTA, AARP, the Civil Service Retired Employees Association, etc. - they are national organizations with national goals. They have state chapters. They cover under 25,000 people. Therefore over 100,000 are unreached by any organization. They live alone in city rooms, they live isolated in the country. They live alone in big white houses in villages. The unreached - we want to reach them, so we formed an organization which we called the State Council of Older People. Task Forces represented here today are organizations of all ages working for older people. The State Council is an organization of older people working to help the older people who need help.

We want to tell the people the benefits available to them. So many of the people don't know about Old Age Assistance, they don't even know about Social Security some of them. They don't know about help for the poor psychic, so many things. We want to have workshops on nutrition, on voter education. We want to fight for them in Legislature and teach them how to fight for themselves. We want to make the public aware of the poverty and the despair, the loneliness and the terror in the lives in so many of our older people.

This organization is growing like wildfire. At a welfare conference of the Eastern States held in New Hampshire recently, I was on the panel for the aging. The title of the panel was cynical and hard hearted. The title was Services for The Aging - Who Gives a Damn. I would change it to something said a long time ago by One who we profess to follow. Serve our aging, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick. Is it nothing to you, or ye that pass by?

Thank you.

PART 4

BLAINE HOUSE

CONFERENCE ON AGING

RESOLUTIONS

EDITORIAL COMMENT AND

NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS

RESOLUTIONS

ACTION PROGRAM FOR MAINE'S ELDERLY

The resolutions stated below were unanimously passed by the 1,000 delegates attending the Blaine House Conference on Aging, Augusta, Maine September 23, 1970. The Conference adopted these items as being of equal importance and considers enactment of all six items to be the minimum program required to meet the current needs of Maine's elderly. The numbering of the items does not suggest a priority listing for each item, but is only the order in which they were presented to the Conference.

Be it resolved that the Blaine House Conference on Aging adopt as its priorities for presentation to and enactment by the 105th Legislature the following proposals spelled out in detail by the respective Task Forces on Aging.

1. Meaningful property tax relief for the elderly without the tax lien clause,
2. Expansion of the Medicaid program to include the cost of prescription drugs and accessory services such as eye, dental and foot care,
3. The development of both urban and rural transportation programs for Maine's elderly citizens,
4. That income maintenance be achieved through the upgrading of the Old Age Assistance Program as recommended by Mrs. Helen Sweet,
5. That housing programs for the elderly be developed to provide both for new units and the rehabilitation of those that are now substandard, and
6. That the system of regional coordinators of older people's activities be developed as recommended by the Reverend Kinney.

MAINE'S LARGEST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Bangor Daily News

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

BANGOR, MAINE, THURSDAY, SEPT. 24, 1970

Morning Sentinel 9/24/70

Resolutions To Help Aged Are OK'ed By Group

AUGUSTA (AP) — The Blaine House Conference on Aging Wednesday adopted two resolutions aimed at improving the plight of the elderly.

One resolution called for property tax relief without a lien provision; expansion of the Medicaid program; and urban and rural transportation for senior citizens.

The other resolution receiving unanimous approval called for income maintenance through upgrading the Old Age Assistance program; new housing for the elderly and renovation of substandard units; and creation of regional coordinators in the state.

Dr. Dean Fisher, state commissioner of health and welfare, noted that the two resolutions "include the most major items considered during the conference today."

He said the proposals will be drafted for consideration by the 105th legislature convening in January.

Maine Senior Citizen Confab Sets Benefit Plan Proposals

By KENT WARD

AUGUSTA — Upwards of 1,000 senior citizens and their supporters — representing a potentially significant voting bloc in this state where 118,000 persons are age 65 and over — made it quite clear here Wednesday that they expect the 105th Legislature to enact legislation alleviating some of the tangible problems associated with growing old.

Participating in the Governor's Conference on Aging at the Augusta Armory, the elderly residents approved recommendations made by five regional task forces for remedial legislation in the areas of senior citizens' income and employment, health, housing, community and social services.

Specifically, they are after these benefits, among others:

—An increase in minimum Social Security benefits, and a change in the Social Security policy so widows may receive 100 per cent, instead of only 50 per cent of the benefits.

—Tax and rent relief for low-



MAINE'S ELDERLY: Hope In The 105th?

income elderly, without the present tax lien provision which permits municipalities to recover relief costs.

—A 50 per cent reduction in utility service rates, plus elim-

ination of the utility deposit requirement.

—Expansion of the Medicaid program to cover drugs, dental expenses, and hearing services.

—An increase of Old Age Assistance benefits to \$110 per month in concert with pending federal legislation.

—The hiring of 10 "regional coordinators" to bring to the elderly the latest information on available programs.

—A sizeable increase in the number of homemakers assigned to look after the needs of the elderly not in institutions, and an expansion of the home nursing and home health agencies.

—Assistance with low-income housing or home improvements through the State Housing Authority.

The recommendations came in task force reports by Mrs. George Sweet of Houlton, Floyd G. Scammon of Orono, the Rev. Gerald Kinney of Camden, and Harold Collins of East Wilton, and many of the suggestions

(Continued on Page 2, Col. 4)

Senior Citizen Proposals Outlined

(Continued From Page 1)
drew hearty applause from the elderly listeners who represented every section of the state.

Gov. Kenneth M. Curtis, addressing the opening session of the conference, pledged that if he is re-elected he will see that many of the proposals find their

way into bills for presentation to the 105th Legislature.

The governor said he believes the 1971 legislature convening next January will see a broad-based drive for programs to improve living conditions of the state's senior citizens, calling the elderly "a cohesive, visible force for social action."

Curtis said that if he is returned to the governor's office in November he will again seek to obtain property tax relief for the elderly.

"We must replace the present law with one that provides the elderly with relief from existing property tax burdens as well as property tax increases. That law should be available to the elderly who rent their homes as well as to those who own them, and it should involve a cash refund to the elderly paid from the state's general fund," he declared. "It should have absolutely no lien provision at all."

The governor said a consultant has been hired by the state to design a demonstration transportation project which would give the elderly convenient access to a variety of services.

Curtis, who formed the Committee on Aging last November and directed it to suggest solu-

tions to problems plaguing the elderly, said he thinks that the state is awakening to these problems.

Now, he said, "We must transform our commitment into programs that, at long last, assure the comfort and dignity of our elderly population, who, I like to say, are our own mothers and fathers."

Wednesday's conference was called to prepare Maine's contribution to the 1971 White House Conference on Aging. The chairman of that conference, John B. Martin, a Michigan lawyer and Special Assistant to the President for Aging, was in attendance.

Martin had high praise for recent report "Steps For Maine's Elderly," released by

the Governor's Committee on Aging, whose chairman is Dominic T. Giordano of Sangerville. The report documents problems of the elderly and makes recommendations for improving their lot.

Said Martin, "This is one of the best analysis I have seen on the needs of older people in any state, and I intend to see that it is sent to the other 49 states."

Martin told the audience that the White House conference is aimed at "developing a national policy on aging to benefit all Americans. To accomplish this, delegates must take into account the working patterns of government, the structure of our population, the intensity of competition for resources."

Seniors' Strength Noted

AUGUSTA — Gov. Curtis told a Blaine House Conference on Aging Wednesday that Maine's 118,000 senior citizens are becoming "A cohesive, visible force for social action." He predicted the 1971 legislature will see a broad-based drive to improve their living conditions.

BOSTON HERALD TRAVELER, THURSDAY, SEPT. 24, 1970

-New England Today-

Maine Elderly Cite Insufficient Income

AUGUSTA, Me. (UPI) — Lack of sufficient income is the major problem of more than half of Maine's elderly citizens, the Governor's Conference on Aging was told yesterday.

The 1,000 delegates from senior citizens' groups were told that a survey showed 54 per cent of the state's elderly rated low income as "their major and most pressing problem."

President's Aide Aging Describes Isolation Curse

AUGUSTA (AP) — The President's special assistant on Aging described Wednesday the isolation of millions of elderly people who live by themselves as the greatest curse in present day America.

Five million of the nation's aged live alone, said John B. Martin, who lamented that "no one ever rings their bell."

Although their rooms have no bars, Martin said, they can be just as confining as prison cells.

Addressing the Blaine House Conference on Aging, the former Republican national committeeman from Michigan advocated a group feeding plan, "Food and Friendship," which would pro-

vide "nourishment of spirit as well as body."

Under the program, the aged would be transported to a central point where they would be given a daily hot meal and have the opportunity to meet with others.

Martin will preside over the 1971 White House Conference on Aging, which he predicted would lead to an improved national policy for the elderly.

"Congress is responsive and receptive to the needs of older people, but I hardly need to add that there's a great competition for financial resources," he told the gathering of some 400 of Maine's senior citizens.

Besides loneliness, other problems facing the elderly include insufficient income and inadequate housing, transportation facilities and health care, Martin said.

'Prison Cells' For Aged Called Curse Of U. S.

By HAZEL LOVEITT

AUGUSTA — Isolation of the elderly "in rooms that don't have bars on them but are just as confining as a prison cell" is the greatest curse in America today, according to U.S. Commissioner of Aging John B. Martin.

Speaking to 1,000 delegates Wednesday at the day-long Blaine House Conference on Aging, Martin, special assistant to the President, deplored the fact that five million of the nation's aged live alone. He termed it tragic that, "no one ever rings their bell."

Martin called for a group feeding plan, "Food and Friendship," in which the aged person who so wished would be transported to a central point for one "good, hot meal" daily and meet with others, "for nourishment of spirit as well as body."

MARTIN WILL BE chairman of the 1971 White House Conference on Aging for which a task force of the Maine Committee on Aging prepared a comprehensive report on senior citizens here.

That report, "Steps For Maine's Elderly," was lauded by Martin as outstanding, and "one of the first efforts of its kind in the country." He said copies would be distributed to committees on aging in all other states.

Martin called lack of sufficient income for the aged "the number one problem," as did the Maine report. He said that one out of four of the nation's aged is living at the poverty level and insisted that "we have the capacity in this country to bring our older people out of poverty."

The second most acute problem affecting Maine's elderly—poor health and inadequate health care—is also second nationwide, according to Martin.

HE CITED the past year as one of accomplishment for the Nixon administration in regard to the elderly.

The President has, he said, suggested an increase in the federal old age assistance minimum to \$110 a person to bring 600,000 aged couples above the poverty status; an increase in old age and survivor's benefits, and an automatic cost-of-living increase to be included in social security benefits.

President Nixon has also a liberalization of the retirement test so persons over 65 who wish to work won't be penalized by losing Social Security benefits and an integrated network of social services for the aged at the local level and improvements in the Medicare-Medicaid program.

Martin, former Michigan legislator and GOP national committeeman, Rhodes scholar and retired lawyer, predicted that Congress "will go along" with the President's recommendation that persons receiving Social Security be allowed to earn a top of \$3,800 a year.

He said lack of transportation is another critical problem of the aged "especially if they live in the country."

HE NOTED THAT housing needs of the elderly are also acute and that various programs have been started but are now slowed down due to high interest rates.

Five chairmen of the Maine task force on aging presented summaries of committee findings.

Chairman Harold Collins of Wilton said Maine has the highest percentage of aged in ratio to its population of any New England states and ranks lowest in average Social Security monthly benefits.

His committee stressed the need for a change in the tax relief bill. "In order to keep the elderly living in their own homes, tax and rent relief legislation is vital," he said.

The committee also recommended as a supplement to that legislation that the elderly be granted a 50 per cent reduction in utility service rates and elimination of the deposit requirement.

CHAIRMAN GERALD Kinney of Rockland cited the need for regional coordinators to organize programs and correlate services available to the aged. His committee suggested the need to expand the Home Nursing Care and Homemaker Service programs and advocated more financial assistance from the state for these agencies.

Mrs. George Sweet of Houlton reported that the committee on which she served stressed the need for more state funds to be combined with federal money so the Medicaid program could be expanded to include drugs, dental programs and eye and hearing services.

In a report on transportation and housing, state chairman Floyd Scammon of Orono lamented the long wait for driver's license examination results.

He said that when the state takes away an aged person's right to drive a car, it should take some responsibility for his transportation needs. He cited the need for buses to serve the elderly.

On housing problems Scammon said, "There is much that needs to be done for the low income elderly in our rural communities in the way of housing that can best be done by the state Housing Authority."

Chairman Miss Mary Worthley of West Lebanon emphasized the need for preventive health care, accessory health services, increase in Homemaker Services and mobile health clinics for rural areas.

SHE TOLD the delegates that "standards of care in many nursing homes are good, even very good. But others vary from poor to terrible and from terrible to horrendous. We need a loud public outcry in Maine about nursing home standards."

Miss Worthley's committee recommended that a small sum of money be available for some badly needed repair or house improvement or health aid.

Mobile homes, according to Miss Worthley, may be the solution to the problems. "It need not be a trailer park ghetto as some towns feel it would be; there should be adequate safeguards."

Resolutions passed by almost unanimous approval were to ask the 105th Legislature for: 1. a meaningful property tax without the tax lien provision; 2. expansion of Medicaid to include accessory services; 3. development of urban and rural transportation programs for the state's aged; 4. upgrading of the old age assistance program; 5. development of housing to provide new units and improve substandard ones and establishment of a system of regional coordinators.

Curtis Sees Enactment Of Laws Assisting Aged

AUGUSTA (AP) — Gov. Curtis said Wednesday he believes the 1971 legislature will see “a broad-based drive “for” programs to improve the living conditions of Maine’s 118,000 senior citizens.

He told the Blaine House Conference on Aging that because of “the organizing work of state officials and community action programs and the efforts of leaders within the elderly community, the senior citizens of Maine are becoming a cohesive, visible force for social action.”

The Democratic incumbent pledged that if re-elected in November he will again try to obtain property tax relief to the elderly through the legislature-controlled by Republicans.

“We must replace the present law with one that provides the elderly with relief from existing property tax burdens as well as property tax increases,” he said.

“That law should be available to the elderly who rent their homes as well as to those who own them, and it should involve

a cash refund to the elderly paid from the state’s general fund,” Curtis said. “It should have absolutely no lien provision at all.”

The governor’s speech was interrupted five times by applause from the 400 elderly persons attending the all-day session at the Augusta Armory.

Curtis said it is also “crucial” that the Old Age Assistance program be reformed and “the claim against the estate provision must be removed.”

He also called for consideration of a Maine Health Facilities Authority which could make loans for construction of extended and intermediate care facilities; improved coverage of the food assistance program; expansion of the homemaker program; accelerated efforts to

make housing available to the elderly; and changes in the social security laws.

The state’s chief executive noted that a consultant has already been hired by the state to design a demonstration transportation project which would give the elderly convenient access to a variety of services.

“If this project proves successful, it could be used as a model for senior citizen transportation programs throughout Maine,” he said.

“Having awakened to the true dimensions of the problems of the elderly, we must now transform our commitment into programs, that, at long last assure the comfort and dignity of our elderly population who I like to say are our own mothers and fathers,” Curtis said.

Lewiston Sun 9/24/70 CURTIS SEES LEGISLATURE FACING BID TO AID AGED

recommendations which came out of an excellent comprehensive report by the Committee on Aging.

One of the most forceful speakers of the day was Miss Mary Worthley of West Lebanon, chairman of the Southwestern Task Force which helped to compile the report. Miss Worthley hit strongly on the subject of improved nursing home standards—an item which could very well become a strong issue in the 105th Legislature. The lady told the audience that there are some good and excellent nursing homes but that others vary “from poor to terrible, and from terrible to horrendous . . .”

Bangor Daily 9/26/70

Don’t count the senior citizen constituency out as a potent voting force this November. The candidates who promise to do something to help our elderly with the problems associated with growing old will pick up a few votes from this bloc, as the Governor’s Conference on Aging at the Augusta Armory Wednesday demonstrated.

The conference drew nearly a full house of senior citizens and their supporters of both political parties to discuss the legislative

Curtis Predicts New Programs To Help Elderly

By PHYLLIS AUSTIN

AUGUSTA (AP) — Gov. Curtis said Wednesday he believes the 1971 legislature will see “a broad-based drive “for” programs to improve the living conditions of Maine’s 118,000 senior citizens.

He told the Blaine House Conference on Aging that because of “the organizing work of state officials and community action programs and the efforts of leaders within the elderly community, the senior citizens are a cohesive, visible force for social action.”

The conference was called to prepare Maine’s contribution for the 1971 White House Conference on Aging. Representing the President at the meeting was John B. Martin, special assistant to the President for Aging and chairman of the national meeting next year.

Martin told the audience that the White House conference is aimed at “developing a national policy on aging to benefit all Americans.

“To accomplish this, delegates must take into account the working patterns of government, the structure of our population, the intensity of competition for resources.

“If they fail to do so,” Martin said, “then recommendations will gather dust beside other reports whose authors labored long and hard but fruitlessly.”

He praised the state committee on aging’s recently released report, “Steps for Maine’s Elderly,” which gives the first accurate picture of the problems of the elderly and makes recommendations for improving their lot.

“This is one of the best analyses I have seen on the needs of older people in any state, and I intend it be sent to the other 49 states,” Martin added.

Ask That 105th Ease Problems Of Elderly

Upwards of 1,000 Senior Citizens and their supporters, representing a potentially significant voting block in the state where 118,000 persons are 65 and over, have made it quite clear that they expect the 105th Legislature to enact legislation alleviating some of the problems of the elderly.

The message was carried back to Caribou by George Beale, Northern Maine chairman of the Maine Task Force on Aging, after he had attended the Blaine House Conference on Aging, hosted by Governor Kenneth M. Curtis at Augusta.

Beale said two commercial buses and several cars left the county to attend the meet at which a welcome was extended by Dean Fisher, MD, commissioner of Health and Welfare, and by Governor Curtis.

Curtis told those present that if he is returned to the Governor's office in November he will seek to obtain property tax relief for the elderly. Curtis, who formed the committee on aging last November and directed it to suggest solution to problems plaguing the elderly, said he thinks the state is awakening to these problems. "Now," he said, "We must transform our commitment into programs that at long last assure the comfort and dignity

Isolation Of The Elderly Held Greatest U.S. Curse

AUGUSTA — U.S. Commissioner of Aging John B. Martin told some 1,000 delegates to the Blaine House Conference on Aging yesterday that isolation of the elderly is the nation's greatest curse. They live, he said, in "rooms that don't have bars but are just as confining as prison cells."

He called for a plan whereby aged persons wishing to may be transported once a day to a central point for a hot meal and an opportunity to socialize with their peers, to receive "nourishment of the spirit as well as the body." Martin, who will head the White house Conference on Ag-

News Lincoln 9/24/70

Legislator-Columnist Decries Fate Of Elderly Mo. Citizens

By Rep. S. Glenn Starbird, Jr.

The problem of Maine's elderly citizens have too long been either totally ignored or only had token gestures made in resolving them. This must change, we can ignore our older people no longer. After all these people are our parents and grandparents, those who have worked and sacrificed so that we of the younger generations might have a better start in life than they did. The average elderly person in Maine today relies heavily on Social Security for income, and has many more health problems than the younger population of the state. It is time that Maine did something to help solve these two chief problems of the elderly.

It is well known that Maine has a state old age pension system and it is also quite well known that to get this pension the prospective recipient that owns any property must allow the state to take a lien on that property in order to get the pension. This would not be so bad if it were not also true that the person trying for a pension who has no property at all can still get the pension.

This double-standard between persons who have property and those who have none is unfair and should be done away with. Another thing that is hurting our senior citizens is the practice of reducing state pension benefits if one's Social Security is raised. It would seem that by doing away with these two practices Maine could go a long way toward easing the financial problems of our older people without substantial extra cost. As to the health of the older people, it would seem that in view of the way the Health and Welfare Department is expanding in areas that it would do well to stay out of, some improvement in Health facilities for the aged could be found.

I think that since Maine is the fourth ranking state in the nation in the percentage of persons over 65 in population, numbering 118,000 or 12.1% of the total, the next legislation should seriously consider the two suggestions in this article at the very least, as a start toward making the lives of those 118,000 citizens of Maine somewhat easier.

Portland Evening Express 9/23/70

ing in December of 1971, lauded the Maine Committee on Aging's report compiled for that conference as one of the first and best efforts of its kind in the country and said the report, "Steps For Maine's Elderly" would be distributed throughout the United States.

HE LISTED as critical needs of the nations elderly: lack of sufficient income, poor health care and inadequate housing, all listed as acute needs here by the state's committee on aging. Martin, retired Michigan lawyer, Rhodes Scholar, and former Michigan legislator and GOP national committeeman, named several areas of accomplishment by the Nixon administration affecting the aged.

Lewiston Sun 9/24/70

Auburn Senior Citizens Among Those at Augusta Conference

An informative and interesting program was enjoyed by Auburn Senior Citizens who attended the Blaine House conference on Aging at the Augusta Armory on Wednesday.

A breakfast of donuts and coffee was served upon arrival and Dean Fisher M D Commissioner of the Maine Department of Health and Welfare was master of ceremonies. The Rev. David Glendenning gave the invocation, and Dr. Fisher welcomed the 1000 Senior citizens present from all over the state.

He introduced Governor Kenneth M. Curtis, who expressed his interest in the affairs of the elderly. Until recent years the subject of aging and care of the elderly was seldom discussed and changes in their lives not understood. He hoped that the 1971 Legislative session would work to improve new conditions and is looking forward to receiving recommendations from the various task forces to work with and for the Senior Citizens.

Maine has been divided into five regions of task forces on aging and Mrs. Helen Sweet of the Northern Task Force, Aroostook County was the next speaker on the program.

She explained that heating and food costs are higher in that area and winters were longer. She believed that old age assistance should be advanced to \$110 a month; also that Medicare should be expanded to include eye care, hearing aids, a dental program and medicines.

Floyd Scammon of the Eastern Task Force stressed the need for transportation for the elderly people at least once a week, since many stop driving at the age of 80.

Gerald Kinney of the Central Task Force (Androscoggin, Kennebec Lincoln Sagadahoc and Somerset counties) felt that the state should install Regional Coordinator service with ten paid workers, should have better health care and that more help in homemaking should be available so that elderly could stay in their homes and not go to nursing homes.

Robert Frates was moderator and told of the background of the Task Force and he is the

coordinator of the book "Steps for Maine's Elderly" and has been constantly traveling throughout the state bringing help, new ideas and guidance to all groups working on this project.

The keynote speaker was John B. Martin, special assistant to the president on aging. This was his first visit to Maine since he came here to attend camp at the age of ten. This was the largest meeting of Senior Citizens assembled to study the problems that he has so far attended. He complimented the five Task Forces and all those who helped to put out the book. He asked that copies of it be sent to all 49 states, four territories and the District of Columbia and said that Maine has a running start on everyone else. He then told of the coming 1971 White House Conference for aging and spoke of the comprehensive program for food friendship for elderly.

Harold Putnam of Boston, whose father now lives in the Augusta area, told about a New England Conference to be held soon. Maine would send delegates along with other New England States, who will work to improve rural health and augment better survival conditions in this area.

Harold Collins of Western Task Force told of the need for increased income in all of the New England States. Maine ranks lowest for its average Social Security benefits but it has the highest percent of the aging, in ratio to its population in all of the New England States. He thinks that the elderly should be granted rent relief and reduction in utility rates including gas, oil electricity, telephone and meter-water rates. In Maine the elderly comprise 12 per cent of the population.

The final speaker was Miss Mary Worthley of Task Force Five, which comprises Cumberland and York Counties. She recommended better health conditions for the elderly and mobile clinics for rural regions, as well as preventive care which will include foot aid, hearing aid and a higher standard of care in some nursing homes.

A short discussion followed and several recommendations were adapted.

Auburn Senior Citizens who attended were Mr. and Mrs. Robin Dow, Mrs. and Mrs. Ralph Peterson, Mr. and Mrs. Edward LaCourse, Mr. and Mrs. Danie Lowe, Mrs. Ada Damon, Mrs. Lottie Lake, Mrs. Ruth Ward, Mrs. Betty Bennett, Mrs. Esther Cooper and Mrs. Frances Hodgkins.

PORTLAND EVENING EXPRESS

PORTLAND, MAINE, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1970

On Helping Maine's Elderly

When a thousand persons will turn out for an all-day meeting at Augusta, that reflects a large amount of interest in a major problem.

That's what happened on Wednesday at the Blaine House Conference on Aging, called to examine the problems of Maine's estimated 118,000 men and women over 65, and how their lives could be made more productive and enjoyable.

The conference was provided with an excellent resource work, the comprehensive "Steps For Maine's Elderly," compiled by the governor's Committee on Aging. The little volume, fat with figures and facts, was praised by John B. Martin, U. S. Commissioner for the Aging, as "one of the first efforts of its kind in the country", and he promised national distribution to similar groups.

Mr. Martin also dwelt on the leading problems of the aging—lack of sufficient income, poor health and inadequate health care, housing, transportation, and social services. Conceding that these basic needs of the elderly are in short supply here, this is also true of all of the other states.

It is difficult to reach out and help the elderly because they are scattered, and because so many are immobilized. Five million of them live alone, and in Mr. Martin's words, "no one ever rings their bell." One of the best suggestions he made was a "food and friendship" program to transport those who wished it to a central point for a daily nutritious hot meal and a chance to mingle with others. President Nixon has proposed a boost in the minimum old age assistance grant to \$110 a month, an increase in old age and survivors benefits, a cost-of-living increase built into Social Security, and the right of persons on Social Security to earn a maximum of \$3,800 a year without being penalized.

As for Maine, as Gov. Curtis pointed out in his own address, it can abolish the law placing tax liens on property owned by the aged as the price of local property tax relief, a heartless statute which may have strong political impact in the coming election. So by stages this state can prove to the elderly that it recognizes their needs and that it does care. The mere fact their plight is recognized is worth something.

The Bangor Daily News

Thursday, October 1, 1970

Dawn Of A New Age For The Aged?

Our society is uncomfortable in the presence of the aged. Our smiles are apt to be forced, our words unctuous.

We see them, the old ones, rustling on porches or drooped on park benches, and we give both them and the pigeons a wide berth.

We've called them "senior citizens" so often that the butter in our mouths should be growing rancid, for all the while we've been treating them like second-class citizens.

We've held seminars on geriatrics (another word we're prone to use, to avoid the cold gray truth called age), and we've limned the problems. But we haven't dared solutions.

A different kind of geriatrics conference was held in Augusta last week. It was different mainly because the aged themselves were there in force; hundreds of them managed — one way or another — to come from all over the state to hear the promises and the programs advanced by the "junior citizens."

The Governor's Conference on Aging, the first of many planned throughout the nation in preparation for next year's White House Conference, was a warming start toward atonement for the sins of neglect by the not-yet-old.

Gov. Curtis told the elderly audience that the state is awakening to their problems and that the 105th Legislature will have a chance to act on them.

John B. Martin, special assistant to President Nixon, who was present in Augusta and who will chair the national meeting in 1971, had high praise for the documentary report prepared by the governor's committee, calling it "one of the best analyses I have seen on the needs of older people in any state" and vowing to send it to the other 49 states.

Recommendations which were approved by the elderly caucus embraced

remedial legislation — to cut property taxes and utility rates, to increase minimum Social Security benefits and expand Medicaid, and so on — that would help eliminate the tangible problems of the aged.

But even more significant, perhaps, was the conference's concern for the intangible — the loneliness of humanity's falling leaves.

Five million of the nation's aged live alone and "no one ever rings their bell." Their wintry isolation, said Martin, is the nation's greatest curse.

In one of the more humanitarian departures of the session, the presidential assistant advocated a group feeding plan, "Food and Friendship," which he said would provide nourishment of spirit as well as body. Under the program, the aged would be transported to a central point where they would get a daily hot meal and have a chance to meet others.

It is not the debatable practicality of such a plan that is important here. It is the fact that such a plan was advanced. When society starts thinking of the aged as people, then the biggest generation gap of all will have been bridged.

The gathering admittedly had political undertones. The audience represented a potentially significant voting bloc of 118,000 persons age 65 and over in Maine. Gov. Curtis was not unaware of that fact. And Martin is a former Republican national committeeman from Michigan.

But overriding all this is the hope that was prevalent at the pioneer Maine conference that a new day is dawning for society's elderly. It will be up to the next legislature and the Congress, and to all of us, to see that the Augusta spirit is translated into a humane program worthy of the society these elderly people helped build. Let's grow old together.

Sen. Muskie Underlines Problems Of The Elderly

Social Security, Medicare, and Old Age Assistance programs and other national legislation of value in dealing with the problems of the aged have been enacted, "but we never have really considered the problems of the elderly within the framework of a fully developed national policy," Sen. Edmund S. Muskie told the Bangor Lions Club Wednesday.

Addressing a luncheon at the Red Lion Restaurant, Sen. Muskie voiced support for several measures now before the Congress which have a potential for improving the lives of the elderly.

Cites Proposals

— A 10 per cent increase in Social Security benefits.

— A basic minimum income for the elderly, under President Nixon's Family Assistance Plan.

— The expansion of low-cost housing for the elderly and insurance against all of their medical costs — principles which he said are contained in pending legislation which he has co-sponsored.

Introduced by State Senate candidate Edward Stern of Bangor, Muskie emphasized "a piecemeal approach — no matter how many pieces it consists

of — will never be enough, if our attitude remains one of distance, of feeling apart from the elderly, of acting as if we are doing them a favor."

Praises Curtis

The senator praised Gov. Kenneth M. Curtis for directing a task force to probe the problems of the elderly in Maine, a study which resulted in a recent Blaine House Conference on Aging.

He said he thinks Gov. Curtis "has performed a lasting service to Maine by focusing attention on problems we have never approached adequately anywhere in the country."

And he cautioned Lions and their guests, "There is no need to create a generation gap between us and our older citizens. There is no good reason for them to feel isolated, or for us to feel ashamed, provided we have the understanding, the respect and the willingness to meet the standard which the governor's report sets forth: 'The test of a people is how they behave toward the old.'"

Maine Sunday Telegram, October 25, 1970

SECOND DISTRICT U.S. Rep. William D. Hathaway sounded an optimistic note for improvement of the plight of the elderly.

Speaking in Rumford Saturday night at a City Democratic Committee dinner, Hathaway pointed out that House-passed Social Security amendments provide for tying future Social Security increases to the cost-of-living index and will provide a five per cent across the board increase for all beneficiaries.

He praised work being done for the elderly on the state level in the property-tax relief proposals and said that studies done by the Governor's Committee on Aging and the more recent Blaine House Conference on Aging were instrumental in laying "solid foundational efforts for future state programs."

Senior Citizens' Lives Improving

RUMFORD — "The kind of life Americans have long envisioned for their honored senior citizens is at last becoming more attainable than ever, because of impressive new initiatives being undertaken at the Federal and State levels," Representative William D. Hathaway said here last night.

Speaking to guests attending a dinner sponsored by the Rumford City Democratic Committee, Hathaway lauded the Curtis administration for what he termed "its pioneering work in behalf of the State's elderly." The congressman cited the year-long study performed by the Governor's Committee on Aging and the more recent Blaine House Conference on Aging as "solid foundational efforts for future State programs in this important area."

Hathaway had special praise for the Curtis plan to establish a more meaningful program of property-tax relief for Maine's senior citizens. Under the plan, he explained, relief from existing property-tax burdens and property tax increases would be provided to elderly Maine citizens who rent as well as own their homes. The congressman noted that the plan would not subject elderly persons to tax liens on their property, and that it would involve cash refunds from the State's general fund.

Portland Press Herald 10/22/70

Little Thought Given Old Folks: Muskie

BANGOR (AP) — Sen. Edmund S. Muskie, D-Maine, said Wednesday the nation's approach to handling the problems of its elderly citizens is "piecemeal" and too often relegates them to "spend the latter part of their lives in undignified and impoverished circumstances."

The country must develop a coordinated response to the legitimate needs of the elderly," including "relieving their property tax burdens. . . (and) developing even better ways of forming them about programs of assistance already available to them."

"We have never really considered the problems of the elderly within the framework of a fully developed national policy," Muskie said in remarks to the Bangor Lions Club.

"Isn't it time we established such a national policy out of a sense of duty, out of a sense of responsibility, out of a sense of compassion?" he asked.

He said the country must give its elderly citizens greater opportunities to serve their communities so that their lives may still hold meaning.

Muskie said such a policy means enacting specific measures — on a national level — which have a potential for improving the senior citizens' lives.

Bangor Daily News 10/26/70

DAILY KENNEBEC JOURNAL

10/22/70

Life's like that

A retiring acquaintance reports that the approach of age 65 showers the average American with a whole lot more attention from various sources than anyone ever paid him years ago when he was about to turn 21.

First, his life insurance agent called and explained that by reducing his coverage to a peanut's worth he could stay insured, keep his payments down, and collect a handsome sum upon reaching age 85—or was it 95? Now he can look forward to collecting the money and going on a high old toot at 85 — or 95. And, as his agent explained, should the Grim Reaper whisk him away before then, the amount due would suffice “to put you in the ground.”

Next, the health insurance-hospital insurance people got in touch, noting that the birthday was in the offing and enclosing a card to be signed and returned promptly to assure some kind of coverage supplementing Medicare. And a day or two later, probably by sheer coincidence, the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare took note of his continued existence with a letter beginning: “Dear Social Security Beneficiary. You will be 65

in a few months and will be eligible for Medicare. I hope you will read the enclosed leaflet. . .”

The enclosed leaflet explains that Medicare will pay some but by no means all of your expenses if you have to be hospitalized, and that you'd better also sign up for Medical Insurance “to help pay your doctor bills” (it isn't going to pay them in full, so you'd better stay healthy).

“They didn't make any such fuss over me when I turned 21,” our now elderly acquaintance muses. “In fact, nobody made any fuss at all. One day I was still 20 and the next was my birthday and there I was, aged 21, arrived finally at ‘man's proud estate’ — and I remember feeling sort of puzzled and let down because nothing seemed a bit different from 24 hours ago. I couldn't even go cast my first vote in an election, because this was January and nobody was going to get elected until November.

“But I'll soon be a Senior Citizen, insured for enough to ‘put me in the ground.’ As the saying goes, ‘Whoopee!’”