

the lead. The movement for such pensions traces back to the White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children, called by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1909. This conference directed national attention to the fact that it was not only socially desirable to keep dependent children in their home environments, but also in many cases it was cheaper than maintaining them in state or local institutions.

The first definite legislation for mothers' pensions was enacted in Missouri in 1911, but it applied only to the county in which Kansas City is located. The first statewide law was that of Illinois, enacted in the same year. Colorado followed suit in 1912 and in 1913 mothers' pensions were established in 17 other states. Mothers' pensions are now being paid in all but three states.

At first only widows were eligible, but the laws were gradually broadened to include women who were dependent because of desertion, divorce, imprisonment or insanity of their husbands, or other causes. Several of the states specifically include unwed mothers, and in others unwed mothers are covered by administrative practice. The statutory age limit on allowances for children is usually 16 years, but scarcity of funds during the depression has caused some states to reduce the limit in actual practice to 14 years. Studies made by the Children's Bureau indicate that about 280,000 children in 109,000 families are now covered by mothers' pensions. The average pension is about \$28 a month per family and \$11 per child.

An act to provide Federal aid to maternity and infant welfare was in effect from 1922 to 1929. Renewal of appropriations under this act was recommended by Presidents Coolidge and Hoover, but no action was taken by the Congress.

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The pending Wagner-Doughton Bill covers a tremendously broad field. If passed, none of its provisions becomes effective before the fiscal year 1936. The Federal tax on payrolls under the unemployment insurance plan is not effective until January 1, 1936, and the tax on earnings and employment for old age pensions not until January 1, 1937. In these circumstances there can be no excuse for hasty action. There should be enacted after due consideration a law or laws which within our Constitutional system will provide a substantial measure of economic security without jeopardizing the credit of the government or imposing an excessive burden on industry.



Economic Security

A Study of Proposed Legislation—Its Advantages, Its Dangers, and Its Background



"It is overwhelmingly important to avoid any danger of permanently discrediting the sound and necessary policy of Federal legislation for economic security by attempting to apply it on too ambitious a scale before actual experience has provided guidance for the permanently safe direction of such efforts."

—Franklin D. Roosevelt
January 17, 1935



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