

J. L. M. P.

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~~Allowances for old people's care~~

I WELCOME the opportunity provided by recent correspondence in the press to explain again the relationship between the old age allowance and services in old people's homes.

As pointed out, the old age allowance is given not to meet the cost of basic individual needs nor to pay for daily necessities which are covered by public assistance. The allowance is paid to assist the elderly person and his family to meet any additional financial needs which may arise out of old age. This includes the purchase of services in whatever form such as special health care and attention needs.

To the extent that an old person requires to enter an old people's home, it is not unreasonable that he pays towards his additional needs just as he would have to in ordinary circumstances if he was under the care of his family in the family home.

In the case of the St Joseph's Home for the Aged, which is a private institution providing free services, the question over residents' contributions to the home has already been resolved as the home explained in a statement on October 4; all residents are completely free to handle their Government cash grant as they see fit.

As to financial assistance for old people's homes, the Social Welfare Department has various means available.

Should a private institution, such as the St Joseph's Home, choose not to remain non-subsidized and non-fee-charging, financial assistance can be given through subvention or payments of public assistance to residents.

While any charges or contributions in private institutions are a matter entirely between the institutions and the elderly concerned, it could be helpful if there was a general guideline as to an appropriate level of contribution the institutions may seek from residents under their care, and I will be looking further into this aspect of the matter with a view to providing a guideline for the homes.

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