

Memorandum submitted to Cabinet by the Honourable Minister
of Labour, Employment and Welfare

Amendment to the National Assistance Act
to make possible the grant of Sickness Assistance
to mentally handicapped persons.

Financial assistance from Government is being sought for households who have the care of a mentally handicapped person in the same way as a blind person over the age of 14 is assisted by a pension in terms of Section 5 (2) of the Old Age Pensions Act, 1948, provided his means do not exceed £65.12s.6d. per annum, the means of the household to which he belongs not being taken into account at all.

2. Mental deficiency is a scheduled disease or condition under the National Assistance Act and a mentally deficient person is eligible for Sickness Assistance provided the means of the household to which he belongs do not exceed the scale rate laid down in the Fourth Schedule to the Act. Furthermore, payment of this assistance is subject to the provisions of Section 8 (1)(a) which stipulates that the disease is one which can be alleviated or cured by a special diet or regimen which requires an expenditure not normally incurred by the household.

3. The matter has been thoroughly gone into by this Ministry and in order to alleviate the hardship of said households, it is proposed to amend the National Assistance Act in a way so as to grant the basic sickness assistance rate to households who have the care of a mentally handicapped person certified by a Government Medical Officer as being unable to attend any special school or work, irrespective of the means of the household, provided his personal income does not exceed the scale rate of one person - 65s/- per week.

4. It is estimated that this amendment to the National Assistance Act would entail an additional expenditure of £30,000 in one year.

5. Honourable Members are invited to agree to the proposal in paragraph 3 above.

13 May, 1969.