

Benefit cost deplored

PA Auckland

The cost in 1973 of keeping 9000 people on the domestic purposes benefit had been \$11.5M but last year, "because of changes made by the Labour Government," the bill had gone as high as \$34M for 28,000 beneficiaries, said the Prime Minister (Mr Muldoon) when addressing the Auckland division of the National Party on Saturday.

"This year it would have been \$100M," he said. "No-one can tell me that the social need of those people on the domestic purposes benefit has escalated that much after four years."

Mr Muldoon said the Government would not allow hardship, in spite of the decision to reduce the benefit from \$61 to \$45 a week for the first six months.

"If they need the full domestic purposes benefit, they will get it," he said.

But Mr Muldoon said it should not be possible for a teen-age girl with an ex-nuptial child to go on the benefit until she qualified for a woman-alone benefit and then transfer to superannuation when she turned 60.

He told party delegates at the Auckland division annual meeting on the North Shore, "That is not what social welfare was intended to do."

The Minister of Social Welfare (Mr Walker) would be criticised from one end of the country to the other after his announcement of the decision to reduce the benefit for the first six months. —

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and the Labour Party would "shed all the crocodile tears in the world on the floor of the House."

But the Government was "bringing this thing back to something that really serves social welfare," Mr Muldoon said.

He attacked the news media for failing to emphasise positive aspects of the new policy. These were to reduce the present delay of getting maintenance orders, to provide increased counselling services, and to make a greater effort "to find the fathers and ex-husbands."

"That is the positive side, but you will find the media won't treat that nearly as fully as this area of the benefit," Mr Muldoon said.