

# Second FRONT

## Atlanta's Aid to the Elderly Draws Praise of U.S. Official

By CHRISTENA BLEDSOE

The new U.S. commissioner on aging, John B. Martin, Thursday stressed that all Model Cities programs should include plans for the elderly, and said he would use Atlanta efforts as an example to sell this idea to other cities.

In Atlanta for a regional meeting with personnel in the aging field from five states, Martin took a whirlwind tour of Atlanta's efforts to aid senior citizens, and liked what he saw.

Martin, who also has been appointed as President Nixon's special assistant for the aging, said the Nixon administration plans to put special emphasis on the problems of the elderly.

**UNDER HIS** dual title he will be able to coordinate plans for the elderly with other federal agencies, Martin said.

Through an "understanding" with the Housing and Urban Development Department, Martin said he expects federal officials who review plans for some 150 Model Cities programs across the country to "look with special favor" on those with plans to tend to the needs of the elderly.

Since the Model Cities programs are reviewed annually, Martin said this could serve as a built-in check to assure attention for the elderly.

Some 10 per cent of the population is 65 years and older, and nearly 40 per cent of this group lives in poverty or near-poverty, he said.

Equally bad, Martin said, is the fact that the elderly feel lost and out of the mainstream of our youth-oriented society.

**WHILE** the ranks of the elderly are mushrooming because of medical advances prolonging life, their special problems haven't yet really been grappled with, Martin said.

The elderly tend to be quiet about their problems, so someone needs to "push" for them, Martin said. His Atlanta visit attempts to come up with "innovative ideas" to help make these people feel a useful part of society, he said.

Atlanta and Seattle are among the few cities in the nation now paying attention to their needs under Model Cities programs, Martin said. His Atlanta visit Thursday was the commissioner's first to any of the regional offices.

Thursday Martin visited a foster grandparent project at Grady Memorial Hospital, under which some 41 persons ranging from 60 to 85 years work part-time, at Grady and at the regional mental hospital five days a week caring for children. They are paid \$1.60 an hour.

**EACH WOMAN** is assigned to the care of one child and often attends him a month or longer at Grady. The program is set up to mutually benefit the children and fill a need of senior citizens.

Mrs. Sarah Hinton, 85, told him she loved her work so much that if she were fired, "I'd just come back on my own."

The gray-haired woman said she had 25 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild of her own.

Another woman, who rocked in a rocking chair, bottle-feed-

ing a baby, grinned and said of her charge, "She's spoiled."

Mrs. George Miller, a nurse with the project, told Martin the program could use 50 more foster grandparents at the regional mental hospital alone and 25 more for the new Georgia Retardation Center opening in October.

"I hope I'm talking to the right person," she said with a smile.

**MARTIN** responded, "We want to know about it (the project)—not only where you are but what your dreams are." He said he is now trying to wrangle out of Congress \$9.2 million for foster grandparent programs across the nation.

In the Model Cities area, Martin took a quick neighborhood tour and saw work at the Child Development Center where older persons are being trained as classroom aides, the McDaniel Street Housing project for the aged, and learned of a project that will get volunteers to take the elderly to the doctor, give home care if needed and even deliver meals.

A woman working at the Child Development Center told Martin she was lost before she started working "but I haven't missed a day since . . . It's done a lot for my health," she said with a smile.

Martin commended the metropolitan area Senior Citizens Services Staff, headed by Al Horvath, for plugging for the older people to assure they were included in Model Cities planning in health, education, transportation and housing components.