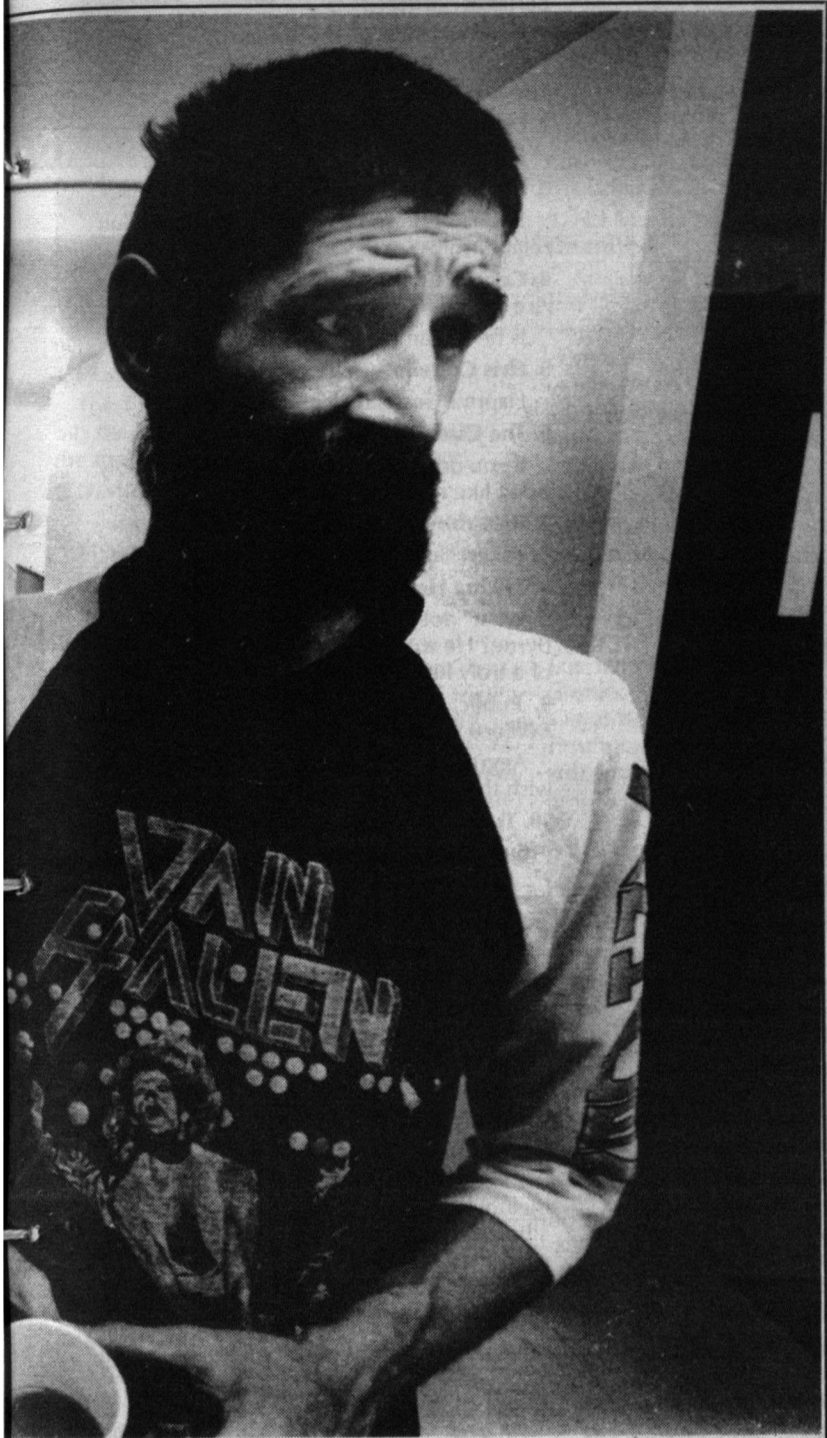


et lessons



Edmonton's skid row.

Imagine dealing with this (the Social Services system) when voices that are telling you to kill yourself echo through your head.

"Until this happens, you won't see these people becoming contributing members to society, because you cannot have a relationship of any sort without trust," Natran says.

However, Natran adds there are reasons the people distrust the system. "These people have to find a way to move from the hospital and fit into the community. After leaving the institution, many head for the inner city, and have no idea what to do next.

"Of course they have to work through social services, but it's so complicated. There's pages and pages to fill out and tons of information to produce. The system is hard for the average person to understand.

"But imagine dealing with this when voices that are telling you to kill yourself echo through your head," Natran says. More often than not, the mentally ill end up back in the hospital.

Workers at the Boyle Street Co-op try and stop the revolving door. They help clients deal with social services, find homes for them, and make them feel like they belong, Natran says.

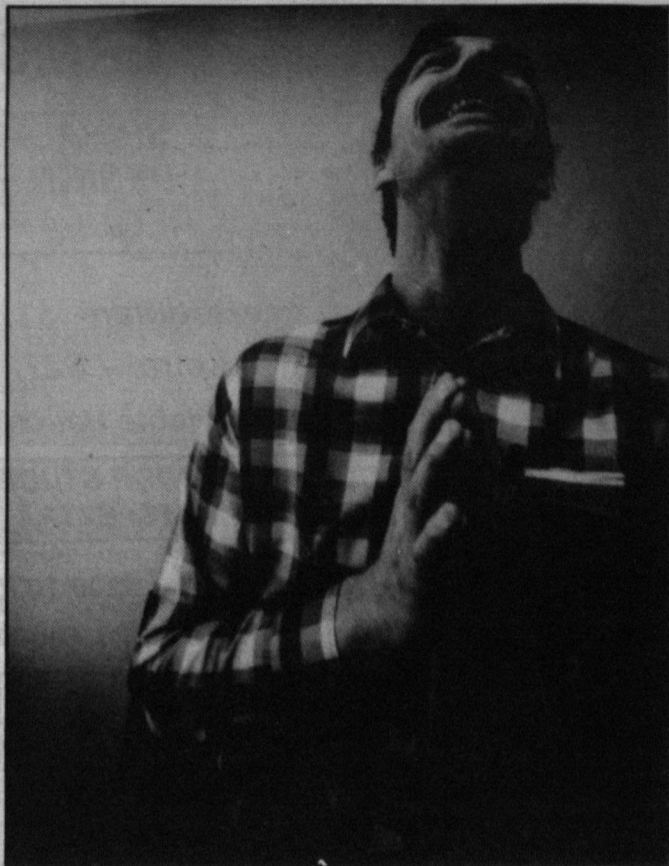
Programs like the one in place at the Co-op developed after the 1950's shift to de-institutionalization. "The major shift, since the 1950's, away from long term hospitalization of the mentally ill, is viewed by some as the major cause of the increase in numbers of the homeless in the 1980's," Natran says, adding programs helping people cope in the community must follow this trend in order to control the number of homeless.

However, Natran says government funds are not following the mentally ill into the community. "Sixty-five per cent of the people who used to be in institutions are now living in the community, but 70 per cent of governments' budgets still are spent on institutions," Natran says.

Natran says he will not allow himself to become discouraged. "Any job you don't get feedback from, you become frustrated. To control this, I look for the positive changes I'm helping to make."

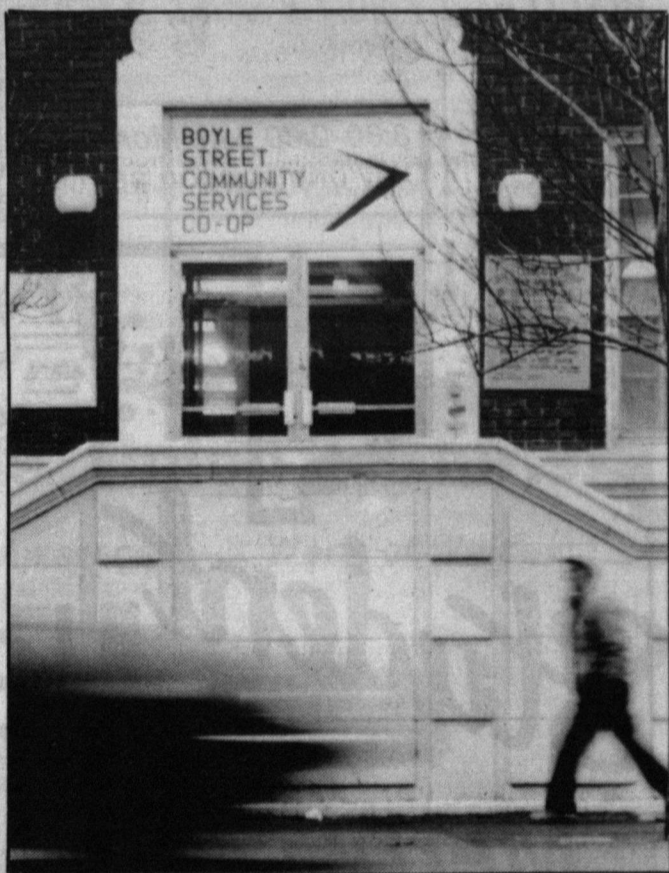
When Natran first met Jane, she refused to do anything with him besides go for coffee, but after three or four weeks of meeting—with some gentle persuasion from Natran—Jane suggested they go shopping.

"Something as small as that can make it all seem worthwhile," Natran says.



Deliverance: inner city resident Raymond Montean volunteers his spare time to the center. He hopes one day to be a minister.

Features and layout by Shannon Taylor
Photos by Jeff Cowley



Hard lessons: life moves at a different pace at the co-op.

get, 1982-83

\$89.3 million

	2.36 million	2.6 %
	50.41	56.1
	14.27	15.9
	3.23	3.6
	4.20	4.7
	15.36	17.1

the inner city community

through the efforts of concerned professionals and inner city residents. "Both groups had identified a remote government bureaucracy—especially in the provision of social services—as a major problem for inner city people. The services tended to be located far from the inner city, and were not designed to take into account the different needs of the people," says Steve Natran, a field placement student at the Co-op.

The Co-op has become an institution in Edmonton's inner city—5,373 people used the services of the organization in 1988 alone.

"Its (the Co-op's) services have expanded to meet the challenges of deinstitutionalization of psychia-

tric patients, growth in the numbers of street kids, native urbanization and urban re-development," Natran notes.

The organization provides a number of programs to help residents in the community, including the youth, family and mental health outreach programs, a drop-in program and field work consultation.

The outreach programs help people get through day to day living. "The outreach workers become liasons for people to interact with the bureaucratic system," Natran says.

A Co-op housing program is also in place to help people find affordable accommodation. "When social services allots \$540 a month, and

only \$180 for rent, people have a hard time finding a place to live," Natran says.

The Co-op's drop in program is one of the most popular. "People need a place to go to get off the street—a place where they can see a friendly face and have a cup of coffee," Natran notes.

An average of 150 people use the drop-in/activity centre at the Co-op each day.

Don House, an inner city resident, says he relies on the services provided by the organization. "Being on skid row doesn't matter when you have some place to go—everyday is a life ... the goodness will always come through."

Give a Kid a Toy

Support Santa's Anonymous



Drop off a new, unwrapped toy at the depot box at either

Lister Hall or Hub Mall.

Your donation will give a toy to a child who otherwise would not get one.