

Culture of Poverty on Killarney Road

by liz smith
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Killarney Road is the largest concentrated area of poverty in Fredericton.

A fork in St. Mary Street, Nashwaaksis, leads left to a white slum, and right to the Highland Avenue black ghetto. Killarney Road has been talked and written about for twenty years, but there has been little change.

Our civilization has deprived most of these people of many basic rights supposedly common to all. The rights of food, water, shelter and cleanliness do not exist on Killarney Road.

The average rent for a home in this area is \$25 monthly. This does not include a furnace. Most houses have a small wood stove. There is also no toilet or tap water in these tiny shacks.

Water is a commodity that most people take for granted. In Killarney Road some people buy water in barrels from a man who trucks it from Devon. There are a few artesian wells.

The women of Killarney Road have petitioned for sewage and plumbing. They have been promised that in January the town of Nashwaaksis will take Killarney Road under its jurisdiction and in April water will be considered. It has taken a hell of a long time to get this far, but it is such a small step and the future still looks black.

The problem of poverty is so complex that it appears hopeless, particularly from the inside. The culture of poverty is very different from that of the middle class, and it is difficult for us to relate to it. A social worker in Killarney Road recently tried to present a typical life pattern to me.

The average couple marry when they are about eighteen with about a grade-seven education. They rent a house for \$25 a month and, since the husband is now working in the woods, they can get a loan from the finance company for furniture and a car. Then the seasonal work ends. There is no other work available. The welfare allowance allots no money for bills and so the money owed the finance company accumulates. The first child is born. Finally there is work again but they can't get ahead because of the load payment build-up and other bills. The husband works hard, maybe making \$75 a week, but

eventually he becomes fed up with having so little to show for his efforts and he gets drunk for a week. Back on welfare.

The people at the welfare office in Fredericton care about these problems and sincerely try to help, but they have so little to offer. A welfare case feels fear and shame in coming to the office and the financial aid offered is minimal. For food the first person in a family is allowed \$26 a month, the second person \$17. Students in residence at UNB are paying roughly \$50 a month for food and there are complaints. Imagine what you would get for half that.

Education might be part of the answer to the problem, but the opportunity really isn't there. There are a few isolated instances of kids getting as far as the early years of high school, but an estimate of the average educational level of a child is grade 8. Some of their parents have no education and most are semi-literate. The reasons why children from slums don't finish school are obvious. They see the futility of the life their parents lead, and are raised to expect no more. Parents do not have time to plan what Joey "will be, when he grows up".

Since their dress, manners and values distinguish them from children of middle class homes, they do not mix easily with these other children. Used to a rough and tumble "home life", they may be hard to handle in school; so the teacher doesn't like them or understand them.

The lower class of society often have a great capacity for love and children are always welcome. Parents have many problems and often a complicated personal life, so the children lack individual attention and incentive and continue the circle their parents are caught up in.

By the time the kids get to grade one they are behind. Their leisure hours have been spent differently and their value system is different. They can't keep up their school work because they have no adequate place to study, and no encouraging home environment.

Another characteristic that distinguishes the culture of poverty from that of the middle class is in the way leisure hours are spent.

Baby-sitters are expensive so adults usually cannot get away from home. The few hours they can get for relaxation are commonly spent in drinking to forget the realities of life.

On Killarney Road, there is a Salvation Army church which provides a Sunday evening service and a Home League meeting for women once a week. There is no recreation for the children during the winter. In the summer Mrs. Jens Kolding runs a playhouse and playground. Mrs. Kolding also has a small library and games for the children to borrow.

A group of students from Saint Thomas University are attempting organizational meetings for the children in the basement of the Edgewood Church this winter.

Next year 70 units of government housing are going to be built in Nashwaaksis. A few people from Killarney Road will be eligible to live in these subsidized homes. This may be a new beginning for a few people.

Many social workers and sociologists see only one way out for low income groups: organization and revolution. It seems that the Company of Young Canadians became increasingly aware of this in their work.

Many of the large cities in Canada already have organizations of the poor. At present they demonstrate and publicize, but their future aim is revolution. Most of these people believe the time for peaceful revolution has passed and violence is the remaining alternative.

The largest and most well-known of these organizations is "The Just Society" in Toronto. It is organized by the poor. The people The Just Society try to reach are other families below the poverty line throughout Canada and particularly in Toronto. They are tired of sending letters that are not acted upon. They realize their power lies in numbers, and through organization.

Some young people in Toronto asked the spokesman for The Just Society what they could do to help. He replied "You can tear down your Establishment structures from the inside."

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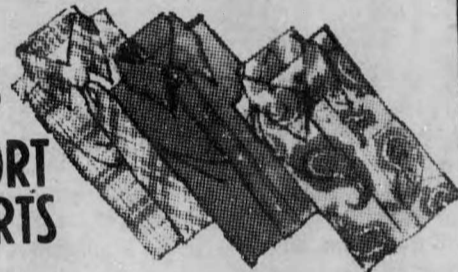
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I, Dale M. Lutes, candidate for student senator, feel I must submit this article to you, the voters, because of one question which was asked in my interview with the BRUNSWICKAN, on Nov. 5th, 1969.

The question was, "Would I be afraid to speak out for the students, if elected?" My answer was no.

To show I mean no, I wish to make the following statement. I believe, you the students have been apathetic toward most everything that is executed in this university, and unless you discard this attitude you will never accomplish anything in this university. I am running for the senate because I feel you want to change this attitude and I would like to play a part in what we, the students, can accomplish if we work as one united force. If you do not want to eject this attitude, and work together, then do not vote for me, as my time can be utilized many other ways, than listening to a body of students complain, but who do not have any intentions of becoming involved. In voicing this opinion to you the voters, I hope I have demonstrated that I am not afraid to speak out.

Dale M. Lutes
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