

*"To pretend that there is equality of opportunity for the poor not only is false but perpetuates a cruel and bitter illusion. Nor does the fault lie in the poor themselves; for the most part, they are neither morally flawed nor physically idle by nature, as many today still seem to believe. Likewise, people assume that we have done much for the poor. This is quite true in theory and to a lesser extent in practice; but what society does with one hand, it often takes away with the other."* Report of the Special Senate Committee on Poverty.

people because they are poor, or do we adopt over-all social policies that get rid of poverty altogether?"

The Committee found numerous examples which seem to show clearly that the Governments and the government administrators regard the clients of the welfare programs as people without rights and without feelings.

The Assistant Director of the Ottawa Social Planning Council told the Committee:

"We get a number of ladies phoning us, toothless women, some of the them young women, many of them with a number of children and they have had their teeth removed at public expense by the Ontario Government and then they have to apply to the municipality to have dentures put in. This is not only a silly situation from the medical point of view but these people have to prove themselves and their need to yet another level of government. This takes time.

They have to go out and get estimates. Then, at last if there is enough money made available by regional government they will have their dental services provided . . ."

In Hamilton, Ontario, an outraged group of welfare recipients marched on the welfare headquarters. The welfare staff workers asked for protective bars to be placed around the welfare administration areas. A Hamilton official told the committee that the methods in use at the welfare office seemed "as if they were carefully designed to increase tension, stimulate hostility in the recipients and a defensiveness in the staff."

The Committee concluded that the welfare system "presents a dismal, dreary picture of life as it is lived by those unfortunate enough to get dependent on government assistance for survival . . . Despite our good intentions and substantial expenditures the welfare system has failed to achieve its social and humanitarian goals."

## The Committee's Guaranteed Income Proposal

The Senate Committee's key recommendation for the solution of poverty in Canada was for a Guaranteed Annual Income.

The total recommendations were, of course, much more complex. The importance of the individual recommendations, the committee noted, "lies in their interdependence. Their effectiveness depends on the extent to which they are integrated into an over-all strategy . . . the most important of these recommendations are those which involve new concepts, structures, and approaches."

The recommendations are:

1. A Guaranteed Annual Income using the Negative Income Tax method.
2. That the Canadian Government finance the GAI.
3. That the GAI cover all Canadians who need it.
4. That it not cover residents who are not Canadian citizens initially nor Canadian citizens who are single, unattached and under forty.

5. That initially the basic allowance rates for the GAI be set at seventy per cent of the poverty line as defined by the Committee.

6. That the GAI incorporate a work-incentive program to assure that those who work receive more income than those who do not. That initially the basic allowance be reduced by seventy cents for every dollar earned.

7. That income maintenance be divorced from social services. Social services would remain the responsibilities of the provincial governments.

8. That existing federal income-maintenance be progressively repealed.

9. That the Canada Assistance Plan be retained and up-dated to serve as a vehicle for federal-provincial co-operation.

10. That no one receive less income under the GAI than he or she now receives from other federal programs.

11. That no Canadians below the poverty line be subject to income tax.