

likely than children in middle or high income families to be at a disadvantage in the areas of health, education, family life and social activities. They are more likely to have been born premature and underweight, to have health problems, to miss and fall behind in school. Family life for poor children is full of innumerable pressures and struggles. Not all poor children live with their own families. Approximately 80,000 Canadian children live in foster care and the vast majority are children of poverty. There is a growing trend toward one-parent families; in 1976, 83.2 per cent of them had a woman as head. Of children living in one-parent families headed by a female, the report found that fully 69 per cent were living in poverty.⁹⁵

141. There is a high correlation between poverty and criminality.

"Poverty in some way increases the risk, the incidence of antisocial behaviour in childhood, but once the antisocial behaviour is present and established it appears to have an engine all of its own, independent of poverty."⁹⁶

One witness gave your Committee three reasons to explain the association of poverty with crime. First, situations of the kind that the poor experience provide most ingredients for the process of criminalization. The poor have the same desire and needs for goods and services as everyone else, but circumstances frequently beyond their control deny them the money they need to get the necessities of life such as basic security, shelter, an adequate diet, and opportunities for recreation. Secondly, poor children tend to be stigmatized in the educational process and to become school drop-outs. Thirdly, the children of the poor are more likely than better off children to be sent to training school or prison for the same offence because their parents are less able to convince the police and courts that incarceration is not in the best interests of society.⁹⁷

142. Poverty is associated with higher than average degrees of family instability, stress, violence, low self-esteem, alcoholism and criminality. Moreover, few if any of these undesirable social indicators of poverty are found alone.⁹⁸ Many witnesses mentioned the way the environment associated with poverty leads children into a criminal life-style. "The dangerous criminal or the violent criminal is at the very end of the spectrum of violence. All of us are violent." Whether this violence will be controlled or will explode will partially depend on whether the child lives in an area where there are street gangs roaming around or in a peaceful neighbourhood.⁹⁹

143. Low rental complexes of subsidized housing lead to a concentration of multi-problem families. These ghettos for the poor create an atmosphere which can easily involve children with a peer group on the streets that indulges in anti-social behaviour and criminal acts.¹⁰⁰

144. In the opinion of your Committee, the experience of poverty in