

the dirt shoved under the rug

A lot of people seem to think that the poor are poor because they don't want to work. However, facts show this is not true.

Most of the poor are employed. They are poor not because they are lazy, but because they are exploited. Tax returns show that half the workers in New Brunswick have incomes of \$3000.00 a year or less.

Employers have all kinds of dodges for paying less than the minimum wage required by law. A recent survey of laundry and cleaning plants in Nova Scotia showed that 57 per cent of the men and 78 per cent of the women were paid less than the minimum wage.

Poverty wages hit women workers especially hard. Women are concentrated in low wage sectors of the economy like retail sales, textile mills, and personal services.

The evidence demonstrates that the poor are poor not because they don't want to work but in spite of their willingness to work. The system and its work ethic has betrayed them and continues to do so.

The majority of those who receive

welfare are not able to work - the aged, the physically handicapped, widows, and one parent families with children.

Only about 5000 "welfare cases" in New Brunswick could be classified as employable. But where are the jobs. There are already 20,000 people unemployed in this province, and the number is rising. The number of jobs in industry declined by 1200 last year. And even though a few desk jobs are opening up, what use are they to a man who has spent his working life farming, logging, or fishing. What use are these jobs to a person who speaks French.

Even if jobs were available, the welfare system would penalize those who took them. According to New Brunswick legislation a welfare recipient is allowed to earn up to \$20. a month in casual employment and retain his full welfare payment. But if someone earned \$21. a month or more, the whole amount of the earnings would be subtracted from the welfare payment, leaving the person with not one cent of extra income. Does the welfare department really expect people to hunt out jobs and work for nothing

Underlying the myth that the poor are poor because its their own fault is the second great myth: that there is equal opportunity for everyone. The myth has its origins in our frontier past. As long as a man could get to the woods, or to a homestead on unbroken land, there was always the promise that he could overcome his poverty-stricken origins.

But equal opportunity is not true now. Wealth and power in this country are determined, with only a few exceptions, by inheritance. So are poverty and powerlessness.

Money is not the only barrier. Education is designed for the middle class to serve their needs; the poor drop out and the poverty cycle perpetuates itself.

The poor in New Brunswick are being driven into an increasingly desperate situation. The rich and the middle class continue to believe in their myths that the poor are lazy and that equal opportunity exists, despite the evidence which shows these myths are false.

The poor are the dirt shoved under the rug of a vicious economy and an unjust society.

Why are you EVICTED?

What follows is an interview which took place between this writer and Mrs. Claudia Williams who was being evicted from her apartment. Judge for yourself is the reason was just.

Q. Why are you being evicted?
A. I have three young children and I think the landlord or superintendent is afraid they will cause too much damage.

Q. Have they caused any damage so far?
A. The janitor claims my two year old broke a window in the door, and I'll admit he did put a tooth brush down the toilet and we had to call the plumber.

Q. Did he break the window?
A. Well, I could believe it, but only the kids around here saw

it happen and they blamed Johnny, but you know how kids are. They'll blame someone who can't talk. No adult saw him do it and the welfare won't pay for it.

Q. You are on welfare then?
A. Yes.

Q. Did you ask the welfare department to help you out or to advise you about your present problem.

A. Yes, but they say it is not their policy to counsel welfare recipients.

Q. Do you think there is any other reason why you might have been asked to leave?

A. I just think the landlord just doesn't want me here because I am on welfare and divorced. Also, last month Jim

(the superintendent) came in and was pretty high and after awhile made a pass at me. I didn't completely discourage him at first because he was feeling good but when he got too fresh I had to force him to go. I had no desire to go behind the bush with him.

Q. Do you think he may want you to leave for this reason?

A. Probably. He might think I would squeal on him.

Q. Do you have a lease?

A. Yes and according to it I shouldn't have to leave until next September.

Q. Have you consulted a lawyer?

A. Yes I did and he doesn't want to fight it because I can't afford to pay him much and he

feels we would just lose in the long run anyway. If a landlord can't get you one way he can get you another. Besides, a lot of lawyers are buddy buddies. They all own real estate. In fact, the man who owns this block is a lawyer.

Q. How many apartments are there in this block.

A. 16

Q. Do people move in and out a lot?

A. Boy, do they! They're coming and going all the time. You

would think the landlord would try and make people a little happier and they would stay longer.

Q. Have you decided to leave rather than fight?

A. Yes, I can't afford to fight though I think I could win.

Q. Do you have a place to go?

A. Yes. I found a place in Nashwaaksis and can move in tonight. A good think too because Jim has threatened to get the sheriff if I am not out my midnight tonight.

THESE ARE YOUR RIGHTS

WELFARE RECIPIENTS HAVE VERY FEW RIGHTS, ACCORDING TO THE SOCIAL WELFARE ACT, 1966. THESE ARE THE RIGHTS WRITTEN INTO THE ACT:

- 1) An applicant for welfare need only give information that is required in his application. (However, it is the welfare official that decides what is relevant).
- 2) An adult welfare recipients is entitled to \$26.00 a month for food.
- 3) A recipient is entitled to up to \$200.00 a year for special items required for employment.
- 4) A household is entitled to up to \$150.00 a year for items of "special need".
- 5) A recipient is entitled to a Health Services Card which helps cover dental and prescription services. (However, individuals are still expected to pay 40 per cent of the dentist bill and one dollar for each prescription. Where is this money to come from?)
- 6) A recipient is allowed to earn up to \$20.00 a month through casual employment. (But, if a person earns more than that then the welfare payments will be reduced by the full amount of the earnings).
- 7) Every person has the right to appeal his or her case if the application for assistance has been turned down, if the amount allotted is insufficient, if assistance has been reduced, discontinued or unreasonably delayed. (However, the appeal may take up to 60 days with no interim assistance).
- 8) Every person on welfare has the right to a measure of human dignity. (How Much?)

THE MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT WELFARE RIGHTS AND POLICIES ARE NOT AVAILABLE TO WELFARE RECIPIENTS OR TO THE PUBLIC. IT IS CONTAINED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF WELFARE POLICY MANUAL WHICH IS NOT A PUBLIC DOCUMENT. WHY NOT?

LEARNING

WITHOUT

BREAKFAST

What are we doing to the children on welfare? A flurry of studies in the past few years all lead to the same conclusion: the nutritional and environmental deprivation experienced by these children perpetuates the welfare cycle in a family. Nutritional deprivation can lead to a loss of as much as 40 potential I.Q. points. The lack of stimulation in the environment of the welfare child similarly represses normal learning and development.

The older child often performs badly in school; and the factors influencing this have often been noted by educators: the child who comes to school without breakfast, who does not have a proper lunch, often sleeps through the school period. These children do not have quiet, or a proper place, to prepare lessons at home for the next day. The manipulation of I.Q. and performance by teachers points up another factor: the phenomenon, the "self-fulfilling prophecy", . . . operates to the detriment of children from the culturally disadvantaged homes. Their I.Q. scores may well become those which are consistent with society's expectations of them.

This process begins with the welfare infant. In N.B., a welfare mother is given \$11.00 to \$13.00 per month to feed her infant: a break-down of the nutritional needs of the infant (per month at local prices) based on The Canadian Mother and Child would cost \$18.00 to \$20.00. The welfare shopper is also deprived of the opportunity of middle-class women fighting inflationary food costs to comparison-shop (the food vouchers must be spent in one place) or buy in bulk. Adding this to the simple lack of money, the Welfare shopper cannot buy the food adequate to the needs of her children.