



CANADA

CANADIAN WEEKLY BULLETIN

INFORMATION DIVISION • DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS • OTTAWA, CANADA

Vol 22 No. 25

June 21, 1967

CONTENTS

Man in a World of Wealth and of Want.....	1
National Library Opens	3
Canadian Houses in Britain	3
NATO Ministers Meet.....	3
Air-Travel Mission to U.S.S.R.	3
Conference on Copyright	4
Alberta Health Centre Grant	4

Welland Canal to be Improved	4
New Uniform to be Tested	4
France-Canada Cultural Meet	5
"Guiding Principles" Success	5
Ontario Rich in Nickel	5
Computer Spots Freight-cars	5
Rare Swans Sighted	6

MAN IN A WORLD OF WEALTH AND OF WANT

The following excerpts are from a recent address by Mr. Maurice Sauvé, the Minister of Forestry and Rural Development, at a meeting organized by the Canadian Catholic Conference at Expo '67:

...Poverty is neither entirely, nor even mainly a matter of pure economics. The error of the theorist who attempts to define it in such terms is obvious when he comes to set the limits of the poverty zone by determining the minimum income above which starts the zone of non-poverty, if you will pardon the expression. In the appendix, an arbitrary level of \$3,000 has been suggested, but it is patent that such a figure must be accompanied by an assortment of "ifs" and "buts" in order to stand up to any kind of critical analysis. For instance, there is a need for regional adjustment, since \$3,000 in a Newfoundland outport is not comparable with the same income in Montreal's St. Henri or Mile-End districts. Factors such as age, family commitments and health must be considered. In other words, the phenomenon of poverty does not lend itself to analysis in purely economic terms.

The truth is that the basic characteristic of poverty is not only a low income - it is a way of life. This point has been amply proved by the American sociologist Oscar Lewis in his report on poverty in Mexico and New York, and again by the newsman Michael Harrington, to quote but two of the best-known authorities.

The chief characteristic of a way of life is that it is all-embracing. To convey this idea, the anthropologist Ruth Benedict uses an expression she found in the books of an old Navajo Indian - "the cup of life". This Indian author very rightly points out that

the cup of life of his people had been shattered by the coming of the white men. For the poor man, the cup of life is also shattered, since it cannot hold the things our technological society offers to those who have succeeded in becoming fully integrated. You have no doubt noticed that I made use of the word "integrated". The same concept could be expressed in terms of "participation". A poor man is one whose circumstances make it impossible for him to participate in the general trend of our Canadian, North American and Western way of life. He is a man, segregated and cut-off, leading an isolated marginal existence.

SOVEREIGN STATE OF POVERTY

His segregation is not only economic but also social and political. Surveys have revealed, for instance, that the poor in our cities have an extremely limited knowledge of the urban environment in which they live, and that one could quite readily determine the boundaries of a very small area from which they seldom, if ever, emerge. Often this area extends no further than a few blocks from their home. A friend of mine who happened to take a group of children from the St. Henri district on a tour of the city told me that, as they were driving up and down the hills of Westmount, the children asked: "In which country are we?" This question strikes one at first as childish, if not stupid, but it is actually quite revealing and not a little shocking. For these people, non-poverty is a completely foreign land, more inaccessible to them than Japan and China are to us.

Thus, poverty engenders its own sovereign state, with its own customs and traditions handed