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SPECIAL COMMUNITY ISSUE

UP AGAINST THE WELFARE SYSTEM

* Today 50,000 people in New Brunswick depend on Welfare for their livelihood.

* New Brunswick's welfare benefits are the lowest in Canada: a basic allowance of \$188. a month for a family of four.

* The minimum nutrition requirements of a child costs \$18. - \$20. a month. Welfare allows only \$11 - \$13.

* With a welfare food voucher you have to buy all your food from one store at one time to last for the whole month.

* Welfare penalizes recipients who obtain part-time work by taking away all their earned income from their welfare payment.

* The administration of welfare is paternalistic and prying: it violates people's freedom and destroys their dignity.



AM I AN UNFIT MOTHER?

January

It is January 7th, my daughter Natalie has been born; ideally I am now a mother; she is mine and I love her. Her father has already left.

I have no source of income, my parents don't want me, I am under 21 and have my Grade 12 to finish.

I have no alternative. I have to go on Welfare.

February
My child needs milk. Similac, is the doctor's suggestion, but it is expensive. Carnation is what I can provide on Welfare.

A desirable environment is required. One small room in a boarding house, sharing stove, fridge and bathroom with 11 others is all I can get.

A large drawer in which Natalie sleeps peacefully is frowned upon by the V.O.N. nurse. She has never been sick, but my new galvanized bucket is not considered safe for

sterilizing the bottles. Allowance for all household and personal items per month is \$8.00.

My caseworker suggests I am too young to handle this - perhaps at age 24 the \$8.00 would go farther?

March - April

Although Natalie is fatherless, she is loved and I care for her as best as I can. Three dollars per week isn't much for the baby's food: but I can take from my \$6./week food allowance. Her clothes are second hand, still, they are warm and clean. We realize you are trying but perhaps it is too difficult, is my caseworker's observation. Welfare considers my friends an undesirable influence on Natalie, my every move seems to be under surveillance. The negative attitude is pulling me under.

They decided to put Natalie under temporary wardship for three months. I definitely want her back.

April - May

Desperately I hunt for something better, finally I acquire an apartment. Welfare isn't too happy with the price, but they agree to it for the time being.

Matrics are coming, I must study. I want to have the chance to pull us out of this situation. I cannot afford a babysitter, so I sit for one family's children, in return they care for Natalie during the day.

June

Natalie is not there today, welfare came and took her from her babysitter, I was never informed. They won't let me see her.

My caseworker tells me that I tried but I failed, and adoption would be the best way.

August

Today I signed Natalie away. They specified child abuse, circling unfit mother on the form. I love my child, and will never see her again.

Am I an unfit mother?

LET'S PRETEND YOU DON'T CARE

YOU'RE POOR

One person in every 12 in New Brunswick depends on welfare payments for his or her livelihood. A total of 50,000 people across the province; nearly 4,000 right here in Fredericton.

These people are getting a rotten deal from our society. Nearly half of them are children, some of them are aged, others are trying to manage one parent households.

Despite the myth about lazy welfare people, most of those able to work would do so if they had a chance. But they don't have a chance. Last year there were 1000 fewer industrial jobs in this province than there were the year before. And they don't have an equal opportunity to get these jobs available because of education and language barriers, and welfare policies that penalize those who work.

The New Brunswick welfare system is probably the worst in Canada. The level of payments are the lowest in the country. Administered by hundreds of "case-workers" the welfare system policies the poor destroying individual liberty and personal choice, replacing hope with resentment, and finally, sullen acquiescence.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ON WELFARE?

- * IT MEANS A CLERK YELLING OUT "VOUCHER CASE".
- * IT MEANS BEING THE ONLY BROWNIE IN THE PACK WITH A DISCONTINUED UNIFORM.
- * IT MEANS BEING CALLED A DRUNK WHEN YOU HAVE A BEER.
- * IT MEANS BUYING A CAN OF LOBSTER ONCE IN FIVE YEARS AND HAVING THE WHOLE PROVINCE KNOW ABOUT IT.
- * IT MEANS PRETENDING YOU DON'T CARE THAT YOU'RE POOR.