

Just for a moment, picture yourself as a junkie. Say you want to clean up your habit, or perhaps even get off smack altogether. Where do you go?

In Edmonton, there's only one place: the Point 3 Project. The Point 3 Project is a rehabilitation and research centre for alcoholics and drug addicts, and includes three houses in Edmonton where 32 people live, all of whom have a common goal: to reduce their dependency on drugs or alcohol.

Rod West, the director of Point 3, started the project in January 1971. Previously he and Tom Douglas, one of the workers at Point 3, had worked at TRUST, a drug crisis centre which started in July 1970. Actually, West and Douglas had been involved with TRUST 8 months before it officially opened. However, West quit TRUST in January 1971 "because I was starting to disagree with the way it was being run. What TRUST did, in my opinion, was cop out to the establishment. In the beginning, they used to give their own medications to kids who were having a bad time with chemicals, but gradually they started referring the kids to hospitals. I don't think this is what the kids wanted, but TRUST was doing it anyway. This was one of the reasons why I quit."

At this point West started up Point 3. "I felt that there was a need in Edmonton for a hard drug rehabilitation centre. There were some heroin addicts hanging around TRUST who didn't really belong there, since TRUST was a drug crisis centre and not a rehabilitation centre for addicts. I decided that Edmonton needed a place for these people to stay and try and help themselves and be helped by others, so I started Point 3".

"I had 35 cents at the time, so I had to get some dough someplace. I got myself on welfare, and also got this bunch of addicts on welfare. Then we persuaded a local landlord to let us have a house on 118 Street for free for a month until we could get off the ground. But the biggest boost came from Dr. David Craig, an Edmonton physician who has considerable experience dealing with addicts and alcoholics. He became our resident physician, and contributed a fortune towards the running of the place out of his own pocket. Without his help we would never have survived the first few months.

Dr. Craig treated a lot of patients with methadone control or withdrawal programs. Methadone is a synthetic substitute for heroin which is the subject of much controversy these days. Nobody is really satisfied with it, but many, including Dr. Craig, feel it's the best alternative available right now. When an addict takes methadone, which is itself a dangerous, addictive narcotic, any heroin he might take has no effect on him. Also the withdrawal symptoms from methadone are not nearly as severe as those from heroin, so many addicts can get rid of their habits altogether by going on a gradual methadone withdrawal treatment. Furthermore, methadone is legal, so when the addict is being treated with methadone, he does not get into legal hassles with the police, which can be a traumatic experience.

"The first four months were absolutely unreal," says West. "We have any idea about how to run an operation of this sort; we had no plans, no controls over what was

Point 3 is the only refuge for Edmonton's drug addicts

photos by TOM TURNER

feature by DAVE McCURDY

being done, no nothing. But before too long people started realizing that it was a good thing, and everybody, the addicts included, started helping to get the whole thing together."

In April West got involved with Dr. T.M. Nelson of the university's Psychology Department, who was interested in doing some research on the project (see accompanying article on Nelson's research). "We were interested in studying the addictive personality," says West. "We had begun to ask questions like, what is an addict? and, what does an addict respond to? We needed answers to these questions, so Dr. Nelson became involved with us. As a result of Dr. Nelson's research, we have become very research-oriented."

Last summer the project received an Opportunities for Youth grant which allowed Nelson to hire 12 students for the summer. In addition, a few students have been doing work with the project during the winter.

As for West himself, he gets no pay for his work with the project. However, he works part-time, and his wife works, so with the money made from those two jobs they survive. However, he says, this voluntary aspect of the project must change. "It's no longer a voluntary thing," he says. "The project is quite well-organized now, and it must become a full-time operation."

"To make it a full-time affair, we need money. We get \$3 per patient per day from the Social Development office of the provincial government, but all that goes for rent, food and transportation. We have absolutely no money for administration or anything else. If we're going to survive, we'll need a grant from the Local Improvement Plan sponsored by the federal government."

"We now house and feed 32 people in three houses. So far it's been a voluntary thing, with Dr. Craig paying a lot of bills out of his own pocket. But that obviously can't go on forever. We can't survive without a considerable grant from somewhere."

The treatment given at the Point 3 Project is based on dependency-consequently the centre treats drug addicts of all kinds, and also alcoholics. "We're interested in finding out what makes an addict tick, and in using that information to help the addict. We have to be research-oriented or we'd be merely do-gooders."

"We think the only person who can help an addict is another addict, so our original aim was to pull a few addicts through, and get them to stick around and help other addicts. Consequently many of our staff are ex-addicts who have stayed to try and help other addicts pull through."

"We think our philosophy of using addicts and ex-addicts to help our patients is sound. After all, when a sick junkie comes in here, I look at him and I have no idea of what he's going through, because I've never experienced it myself. I have no idea of how his experiences with the police have affected him, and I can't possibly convince him that he can get off junk unless he believes it himself, which almost never happens. But another addict had been through the whole scene himself, so he knows how addicts feel. Furthermore, an addict who is off junk is living proof that getting rid of one's habit is possible; so the addict can't believe that it's impossible - he sees a counterexample standing right in front of him."

West claims that Point 3 is basically a success. "We
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This is the house on 118 Street rented by the project. It is here that the administrative offices are located