

APPENDIX "E"

Brief to the
Senate Committee on Poverty

by

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Although I am involved in student government and the initial approach to prepare a brief was made through this channel, I must make it clear from the outset that the views in this brief should be considered those of an individual rather than a representative of a group. I decided to prepare a brief with the intent of having a small group of interested persons work on it. Due to a number of factors, this became impossible; yet, I still felt interested enough to carry the idea through myself.

This brief was as much a method of educating myself on the poverty problem as it was a way of presenting an approach to the problem. Thus my basis is general and probably most of my points will seem redundant to the Committee members.

Yet not being involved with any welfare or aid group has one possible advantage: My brief is not geared towards any particular agency or group and thus my ideas and proposals present a wider base. Whether an advantage or not, I have at least educated myself through the compiling of this brief with a working knowledge of the problems and attitudes of the poor of our country.

In Canada our culture and economy are based on the needs and desires of an affluent populace. Natural resources abound in our nation, so much so that our problem is the economic development of our resources rather than a lack of them. Our per capita income maintains one of the highest averages in the world. Although our economy has suffered from a number of problems which we all are aware of, Canada should have a very bright future lying ahead. Yet one problem which growing abundance has not solved and is not about to solve is poverty. The Economic Council of Canada in its Fifth Annual Review defining the low-income state as using 70 percent or more of one's income for food and clothing and shelter, found that almost 29 percent of the Canadian population fitted into

this category. Although our per capita income level of poverty is higher than in most other countries, the problems of our low-income still remain. Being poor is a degrading experience in Canada even if you realize that there are others less fortunate again than you.

In our capitalistic economy, the economy as a whole is progressing, yet in the wave of progress is leaving an ever-increasing wake of bitter pessimistic poverty-stricken people.

The basic conception of a welfare or low-income class is not undesirable in itself. Indeed in every society there will always be a low-income class no matter whether the economy is stable or unstable nor whether the country itself is affluent or poor. In Canada the poverty level has risen threefold in the last 60 years due to a corresponding rise in per capita income over the same period. Whereas in 1904 the generally accepted poverty level for an individual was \$500 annual income, in 1964 the recognized level was \$1,500 annual income per individual. Thus an expanding economy or an affluent nation does not solve the problem of a poverty class.

The problem lies in the fact that the low-income class is for the most part poverty-stricken and the longer one remains in this class the less chance one has of getting out of it. This is derived from the fact that this class of society has developed a culture and society completely separate from that of the rest of Canadians. Their culture instills in people the feeling of rejection, neglect and disdain by the Canadian society. They are made to feel that many of the rights we middle and upper class Canadians enjoy and expect are not theirs also. They are made to feel inadequate and the longer these feelings are bred in one's mind, the more apt one is to succumb to them. The life of a welfare recipient is one with little hope for advance. This is when the problem of poverty stops becoming economic