

# Dear M. Trudeau: REAL POVERTY



poverty is lonely

*The Real Poverty Report*  
 Ian Adams, William Cameron,  
 Brian Hill, Peter Penz  
 \$2.95 (paperback)  
 M. G. Hurtig Ltd. (Edmonton)

In April 1971, four men resigned from positions as researchers for the Special Senate Committee on Poverty, chaired by Senator David Croll. There is nothing so unusual about this; what sets these men apart from others who leave their jobs is the fact that these four left because they were dedicated to their work, not because they were lazy or bored or had had another offer.

Senator Croll's committee was supposed to come up with a comprehensive report on poverty in Canada: it would identify the poor, tell where they are concentrated, how they got there and why and propose some solutions as to how the problem of poverty in a country which has the second- or is it third now - highest standard of living in the world could be approached.

But Senator Croll is a political animal, and the problem of poverty has some distinctly political facets to it. To use Cleaver's phrase the Senator and his committeemen were "part of the problem" to which they were to find a solution. So when the researchers came up with, to quote from the Preface to this book - "any attempt to discuss the actual production of poverty in Canada", they found that their

input was ignored or edited out by the Senators, who obviously had a vested interest in putting the best face on Government policy.

So the four researchers resigned, but did not lose interest in producing a Report on Poverty. This time, though, *The Real Poverty Report*.

The book represents a clear, easily-read (though not simplistic) analysis of the distribution of wealth in Canada. Starting with a definition of "poverty" in terms of financial and political deprivation, the authors go on to point out how successive Canadian governments, with their vested interests in the well-being of a relatively small minority of well-off citizens, actually produce a class of poor who are virtually doomed to remain so for their entire lives, and whose children may be expected to follow in the same pattern. The "myth of the competitive model" is taken apart and examined in the light of the model's actual performance in Canada, as is the "free-market theory," and the conclusion of the authors is that "The competitive model is a theory of immense elegance: it is internally consistent; it leaves no economic factor unconsidered; and it is easy to understand. There is only one thing wrong with it, and that is that it does not work."

"Big business" comes in for its share of knocks, but unlike many books on this subject which have appeared recently, in this one the Unions too are called to question

for their willingness to go along with senior unions based in the US, where the problems facing workers may be quite different, and requiring other solutions, than those in this country.

A good deal of space is devoted to the reality of "being poor". These are the things that are not always considered when the subject comes up, such as the fact that the poor are often easy victims for advertising firms who teach them that to consume goods - never mind about how to pay for them - is the way to gain the respect of one's society. And so far as equality of opportunity is concerned, that old chestnut is roasted dry by a well-documented section on "Discrimination" which shows how national origin itself often makes the difference between affluence and poverty. To be borne any color but white, any sex but male and of any national origin other than British means that you will have little chance of ever reaching the "top" of Canadian society.

The authors attack government economic planning, or what little of it that there is, by citing the enormous lengths governments are willing to go to to make sure that they do not interfere with the sacred principle of "Free Enterprise", even though these measures would be met with loud cries of "socialism!!" were they applied to individual citizens. However, despite

all the critical statements made in the book, the authors feel that the government is still the most likely structure through which to solve the poverty problem in Canada, once a few basic changes are made in the manner in which the problem is approached. The tool suggested for use on the problem is that of a "relative poverty line", a standard of living one half the average standard of the nation as a whole.

Using this standard, the government could institute a Guaranteed Annual Income for all Canadians. The money could come from a revised tax structure, and from other changes in the current "transfer rates". The question of subsidies to the young is frankly "ducked" by the authors, however on the whole they seem to feel that economic compulsion is not the only reason people enter the work force. The changes to the tax system are explained in a chapter on "An Equitable Tax System", but primarily they have to do with recognizing as "wealth" and therefore taxable some of those items which the affluent use to evade - however legally - paying taxes at present.

The book concludes with a series of suggestions or "recommendations" for change in the areas of health, education, and social services, three areas in which the poor are most concerned and yet which are the source of much discrimination under the present system. The recommendations are based largely on common sense, and on cutting down on some of the "red tape" which seems to absorb much of the funds available for these services.

And finally, "Can we afford it:". As far as the authors are concerned, we may have no choice. The cost of taking even minimal care of the increasing numbers of "poor" in Canada is rising fast, and regulating measures will soon be no substitute for measures to eliminate the problem entirely. This book presents a logical, understandable program for doing just that. The Croll report will cost Canadians over a million dollars, for suggestions based on an examination which, according to the authors of this book, is both incomplete and inaccurate. The publication of this book by Hurtig Ltd. presents Canadians with a *real* look at poverty in this country, and in a format which will probably reach far more of us than will the *other* report.

by sid stephen

## 20 good films from 1971

It's been suggested in certain quarters that 1971 was a poor year for movies. We don't think it was that bad in Edmonton.

Barry Westgate couldn't even come up with 10 films, and then he chose perhaps the *worst* of the year as his best.

Well, that's Barry, and in response we are offering the top 20 films of the year. *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* was the best film by the best director, Robert Altman, and contained some of the best acting by Warren Beatty and Julie Christie.

The rest are listed in no particular order: we just liked them enough to remember.

Note: we have not listed any of the films that opened for Christmas because we haven't reviewed them yet. But some of them deserve to be added to the list.

So, the top 20 are:

McCabe and Mrs. Miller	Altman
Walkabout	Roeg
THX 1138	
Puzzle of a Downfall Child	
Brewster McCloud	Altman

Taking Off	Forman
Born to Win	Passer
The Conformist	Bertolucci
My Night at Maud's	Rohmer
The Beguiled	Siegel
Kluge	Pakula
Alex in Wonderland	
Deep End	Skolimowski
Von Richtofen and Brown	Corman
L'Enfant Sauvage	Truffaut
Bed and Board	Truffaut
La Femme Infidele	Chabrol
This Man Must Die	Chabrol
Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion	Petri
The Clowns	Fellini

That makes a pretty good year of going to the movies.

by Douglas Barbour and Stephen Scobie

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