

BRAM fed up with Nicholson — want action

The Blind Rights Action Movement (BRAM) announced today that it would visit the Ministers of Education of three of the four Atlantic Provinces in an attempt to have improvements made at the Halifax School for the Blind.

"We have waited nine months now since talking with the Minister of Education for Nova Scotia about the deplorable conditions at the school", says

BRAM information officer Chris Stark, "and nothing has happened."

"The Halifax school, which is more than 100 years old, is sadly lacking in adequate modern teaching techniques and lacks proper accommodations for the approximately 160 students who are there," said Stark. "By lack of action, the Nova Scotia government is condoning what amounts to slum housing

conditions at the Halifax school."

He said that BRAM met with N.S. Education Minister Peter Nicholson last winter and had been led to believe that he would take some action to improve conditions at the school. Students from all four Atlantic provinces attend the school here.

"The lack of action by Nicholson has been very

disappointing to the blind people who know what it's like not to have good educational opportunities," said Stark. "We've tried many times recently to get some reaction from Nicholson but he doesn't answer letters and we can't seem to make an appointment with him."

Because of the lack of action by the N.S. Department, BRAM officials will meet with New

Brunswick Education Minister Lorne MacGuigan in Fredericton on December 2. Meetings are tentatively scheduled for January with the Education Ministers of Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island.

"We hope that something can be done to get the four education departments together to finally make some improvements at the school," said Stark.

Poverty — two years to find it

(cont'd from p. 4)

their minds about the myths they now believe in and cease to look down on the poor for being poor. This will be easier to do when or if the poor get the guaranteed annual income. Then they will be practically invisible and therefore easier to forget.

Could it be that this is the whole idea of the exercise???????

"No, no", says the report, "for that is a 'radical' approach and we have rejected it."

According to the Committee report, "The radical approach is based on the theory that the

disadvantaged position of the poor is maintained by an 'establishment' which prevents meaningful redistribution to resources."

"The elimination of poverty, according to this theory, involves a frontal attack on the whole social, economic and political structure. This approach would destroy what now exists and build a bright new world on its ruins...While acknowledging that our problems are serious...the committee rejected the radical solution on the grounds that it offers no meaningful or practical alternative."

Accordingly, the Committee

took a "pragmatic approach to the problem, which does not require radical (or any) changes in the economic system. It is only necessary not to look down on the poor and declare a new poverty line. So basically the approach is either to write about poverty and hope it will go away, or change the whole system as the "radicals" demand."

On that level it therefore becomes necessary to examine the system and decide which approach will work. The Committee did show how the system treats four and one half million people and decided that poverty must be eliminated (not a startling discovery).

Incomes vary greatly

But to call the report weak with the implication that it could be improved would be to miss the point. There are very sound reasons why the report is written the way it is, and ultimately why the report could not have assumed any other form.

All the members of the committee are senators (read: old politicians) coming from very comfortable backgrounds. None are poor; all are businessmen, doctors, or lawyers or sons and daughters of

businessmen, doctors, or lawyers, hence part of an establishment (which they do not think exists). Their backgrounds place them in the top fifth of the population and their incomes keep them there. This top fifth receives almost forty per cent of the total net income in Canada (the poorest fifth receives about seven per cent of the total net income).

Some of the senators may be in the top five per cent of the population which receives about fifteen per cent of the total net income. That means that their salaries or incomes are at least \$25,000 to \$30,000 a year while the income of the poorest twenty per cent range from \$2,500 to \$3,000, or about one-tenth of that. Between 1951 and 1969, the top twenty per cent increased its income by more than the bottom twenty per cent earned as total income.

If the net income were distributed evenly among the Canadian population, on the other hand, it has been estimated that families and unattached individuals would make \$7,900 each, substantially higher than the Committee's poverty line. And while the country became more prosperous from 1961 to 1970 (ie. the Gross National Product rose from 39 to 84 billion dollars) unemployment was not correspondingly reduced. Rather, in 1971 it was the highest in ten years, with up and down periods in between.

But somebody is benefiting from the increased prosperity of the country. It isn't the poor or the unemployed who are the first to suffer when the businessmen in governments make mistakes.

The marshmallow Poverty Report might have pointed out this contradiction except for one very good reason. Senator Chesley W. Carter, a member of the Committee admitted that if every working person in Canada knew and understood what the inequality of income and wealth meant and its economic implications for them and their children, there would be a revolution in this country.

And we mustn't have that...???

That's it except for one interesting little note: "Fighting" Senator Croll's report ringingly declared the need for a "plan for the Seventies"; "from services to money; from helplessness to hope; from despair to destiny..."

Doesn't that sound a bit like: "Let them eat platitudes"?

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The MacDonald Science Library is now open. On the 1st of November the several separate libraries — Biology, Chemistry and Science — were all consolidated into one building with one collection of books and journals. The collection which now remains separate is the Mathematics which is housed in the Oceanography building of the Life Sciences complex.

Any questions which arise can be answered by calling the Information desk at the MacDonald — 2384 or the Information desk at the Killam — 3611.

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