

# United Appeal

## A small purse with many strings

By ANNE BOODY  
The Varsity

"Poverty," the sign says, "is no disgrace—just ridiculously inconvenient."

The sign, in the Huron Street offices of the Just Society, overlooks John Mooney as he deals with the inconvenience of Toronto's poor.

Most of the inconveniences, he'll tell you, grow out of patchwork welfare systems that deal with "case poverty ... poor health, poor education and physical disabilities are seen as the causes of poverty rather than the symptoms of it."

This city's United Appeal, for example, just wrapped up a campaign that got it \$12,100,000.

The UA is a little more than a fund-raising body for 70 agencies in Metro. It also:

- controls these agencies by determining which it will aid and the allocations each will receive.

- involves major corporation executives in a world they understand so poorly they cannot hope to help it.

- has the power to say who may or may not be members of each agency—and uses that power.

The UA, in short, helps the needy by providing a kind of sustenance that is conditional and temporary. As Mooney says: "Our problems have a definite class bias and anyone going into a poor area hoping to make things better should know it won't work."

"You can't expect to go into a depressed area with some kind of a liberal mentality and expect miracles."

Then a woman is on the phone, calling to tell the Just Society that she has a drunk landlord and her apartment is infested with red ants which bite the baby.

Mooney says he'll try to help, but he's been this way before and he isn't optimistic. He'll have to try to fix it by dealing with patchwork welfare people.

"We're in a position to try and help but it gets damn exasperating working through 'the right channels'. But we have to try and help, we have to organize our people."

Mooney organizes outside existing structures because the Just Society—"the union of the poor"—does not receive a cent from the United Appeal.

A UA spokesman says member agencies do not provide either income maintenance or financial assistance, both considered a government responsibility.

"We serve those who pay membership fees and belong to the agencies we allocate money for. We have four boys' clubs in the low-income areas where delinquency is high."

If an individual cannot afford membership fees in his agency there could be negotiations, but, the spokesman says "people take more pride in services in which they themselves invest."

UA's campaign book says:

"Governments have no mandate to finance all health and welfare services. If this happened it would mean that our contributions would be in the form of higher taxes and there would be no cost-saving volunteers."

"Instead, in our democratic system, government and services exist side by side and in many cases work with one another."

"The United Appeal keeps pace with changing times. All its agencies are reviewed regularly so that none of them become extended and so that services are provided in the most efficient manner."

For all the drawbacks of this top-down approach to patchwork welfare, there are still services which member agencies such as the Ontario Welfare Council would like. But the council found out earlier this year that there are strings attached even to top-down assistance.

The council, which receives nearly one-third of its funds from UA, was told after it elected two welfare recipients and two students, that it could lose its grant. The threat grew out of the council's annual meeting last May, when the students and the representatives of the poor were elected.

Arthur Langley, committee chairman of UA's United Community Fund, wrote the council that its function would be reviewed after "an analysis of the difficult 1969 Ontario Welfare Council's annual meeting."

"It was suggested that the council's management, program and finance be the concern of the review. The committee asked the basic question: Is the Ontario Welfare Council an appropriate agency for continued support from the fund?"

The Just Society also says John Yerger, director of the United Community Fund, told directors of councils receiving funds that "he had asked the Metro Police Intelligence to investigate those organizations and elements involved in the Ontario Welfare Council meeting."

UA found itself unable to give official comment on these charges—both Yerger and public relations director Hugh Morrison were, their secretaries said, too busy—but one of their assistants said that "the United Appeal shouldn't comment ... ask the welfare council if you like."

The council had a great deal to say—a spokesman said she could not understand why UA found the May meeting "difficult."

"It was a very exciting and vital conference. There were over 300 people who turned up that we hadn't expected. We couldn't accommodate them so they were standing along the walls."

"If you were a part of the establishment you might have been upset at their appearance—their long hair and jeans and old clothes. But I have a daughter 20 years old so I'm used to it."

"We had them all there, the Indians, the poor, people with housing problems and youth. They were all our guests and we made them feel as welcome as possible. For those who couldn't afford it we paid their food and accommodation."



"You know technically we've always had poor people represented on the council board but we just never made it public until this spring."

And then: "Most of these people are concerned more about their dignity than money problems."

So, as far as the poor are concerned, two Establishment groups argue about how to look after the poor and who does it better—and they do it without involving the poor.

That's reflected in several ways, not the least significant involving traditional welfare links with business and government in an effort to maintain credibility.

The standard approach to welfare by such organizations as UA or the Canadian Welfare Council places the emphasis on case poverty. There's virtually no response to the exploitation of people by corporations for profit and production.

And that's where the business links come in—the membership list of UA's board of trustees looks like a social register.

The board's chairman, for example, is John Barrow, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Simpson-Sears and director of Simpson-Sears Acceptance Co. Ltd. and Allstate Insurance Co. Ltd.

Charles Osbourne Dalton, another prominent trustee, is executive vice-president of Canadian Breweries Ltd. and a director of Canadian Breweries (Quebec) Ltd., Imperial Malting Co. Ltd., Carling Breweries Ltd. and O'Keefe Ale. O'Keefe and Carlings are owned by Canadian Breweries.

The University of Toronto's executive vice-president (non-academic), Alexander Rankin, is a trustee—and also in charge of U of T expansion, a job which brings him into direct contact (and sometimes conflict) with neighboring areas in which many of Toronto's exploited live.

Other firms represented on the board of trustees are Eaton's, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Imperial Oil, Ford, Massey-Ferguson, Proctor and Gamble, Molson's and De Havilland.

Forty of the board's 64 trustees are business executives. The remaining 24 include trade union bureaucrats, civil servants, politicians, professionals and clergymen. The edge goes to the men who have fought labor hardest and are least disposed to discuss, say, redistribution of wealth or profit.

The board, then, with its assortment of executives loaned by monopoly capital to improve a shipping image, ends up functionally serving forces which perpetuate poverty while claiming to offer solutions.

Toronto welfare's Social Planning Council, served by the UA, is directed by John Frei, one-time head of Czechoslovakia's auto industry.

Dr. Frei also was once director of the Urban Social Development Project in Montreal, where he managed to act as consultant for developers expropriating the area in which lived the poor to whom he was to have been responsible.

Now that he helps supply UA with trends and guidelines used in making budget allocations, Dr. Frei finds that social development is too important to be left to social workers alone.

There is, he says, a need for more architects, engineers, economists and politicians. But he's not sure about the poor.

"We tried it in Montreal and it didn't work, and ex-

perience in the States shows that it doesn't work. One welfare recipient won an election to Toronto's 45-member board last spring, but her decisions did little to change the decisions of the board."

As the Just Society's Mooney might note, however, it means little to leave one welfare recipient fighting for survival among 44 executives. And the corporate collision over how the rich should help the poor is unaffected.

So men like Mooney get involved with groups like the Just Society, hoping to work with the current 300-member base of welfare recipients and lower-class workers for social change that will end the need for patchwork welfare.

The Just Society, Mooney notes, must work outside political mainstreams. Change will come only through analysis, education, organizing and action in a combination that excludes traditional approaches.

"The class bias of our problems is reflected by the emphasis that psychologists and sociologists place on 'case poverty'."

"Poverty is not divorced from the political economy of the country. Poverty in Canada is a product of capitalism and capitalism is the force which commands resource allocation and produces such a distorted sense of priorities."

"It's interesting the papers won't print that we call men like John Yerger and John Frei damn liars."

"They are the reason we won't fight in the traditional political mainstream, because they are all alike. None of them really give a damn."

"Our people know what is happening to them, they feel it in their guts."

"Once we have a particularly strong power base, I'd say within two to three years, then we're in a position to set up an alternative model. We'll have free day care, an educational system where the child's education is humanistically rather than economically oriented. We'd also set up politically-based consumer co-ops from which we'd organize."

"Our people are apathetic now. They've been screwed. Why is there only a 37-per cent turnout in elections? We know we're voting for crooks, fuck it, why should we bother with them?"

The telephone rings again. A woman is calling on behalf of her brother, in hospital suffering from a severe asthmatic condition.

He is on welfare and allowed only \$20 a month for drugs. He needed more but couldn't get them. Now he's bedridden.

He has received a letter from the welfare people saying that since he is getting food and a bed in the hospital his usual welfare cheque of \$115 a month will be cut down to \$50.

His medical rates will be the same—\$20. He still needs \$98 a month for rent.

The report sends Mooney back to the phone with the welfare people for the ninth time.

"Certainly the man should be allowed what he needs," he says. "Isn't there anything you would like to do?"

Comes the response: "Sorry, I don't care to answer that. I take my directions from head office and can't go against the regulations. We are really all very compassionate people here. I've been here for 10 years and should know."

"Now really, if he has been cut down and is having trouble, he can appeal on Form 60."