

as unlikely. Rather, program cuts seem the only remaining avenue after ten years of hacking. The Regional Colleges and Saskatchewan Institutes of Arts and Science face reductions as well, in programs, locations and size of staff. Only the details need to be filled in as federal and provincial budgeters decide how deeply to plunge the knife.



Alberta

Marjorie Bencz
Edmonton Food Bank

More than Money

Since 1993, residents of Alberta have seen numerous changes to social welfare programs. Some of these changes include:

- eligibility conditions and benefit levels have been restricted;
- some benefits, such as transportation allowances, have been dropped entirely;
- appeal panels have been given less ability to make decisions which support the needs of a particular client;
- clients are no longer informed about their right to appeal;
- in October of 1993, rates were cut. A single person receives \$394 per month to cover rent, food, clothing, telephone and transportation costs.

By 1995, Alberta's welfare caseload had dropped to 49,000, down by 48% from January, 1993. This slashing of welfare loads is viewed as nothing short of miraculous in many parts of the country and is considered as a model for reforms. But there has not been any evaluation of the human impact of these changes. The goals of the welfare program, called Supports for Independence, have not been reviewed or publicly discussed. However, Social service agencies cite growing numbers of people needing food banks and foregoing other necessities such as children's winter clothing and baby formula.

In April of 1996, the new Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) Plan will replace the Canada Assistance Plan. Some have expressed concern that welfare programs in other parts of Canada will start to look more like Alberta's. After all the planning and discussions in Canada about income security programs, it is important to remember that social policy is about people. It is about real people with hopes and dreams.

Darryl Martin is a young man with hopes and dreams who lost his small network marketing business in Ontario. He moved to Edmonton looking for work, but found himself on Welfare, living at the Y. This is an excerpt from

a poem he submitted to a contest held by Spare Change, the Edmonton street paper.

How many seek for the same position?
A dead end, low pay reality.
Should I give up my dreaming ambitions
And settle in sad mediocrity?

What grows as they pass away
Is, where I am and could be
If I'd money, which today
Makes money which makes money.

Poverty is "no money", so they say
No money finds no food to devour
Hunger has hid health and colour away
Sick complexions send spirits sour.

Poor esteem, to lower faith
Lack of hope, is low of trust
Dishonesty's loss of face
Has no respect, and is cursed.

But a little aid, give to them discussed
Build self-esteem, for accepting truths
From dust, must, rust just one hope helps adjust
Towards the higher spirits light that soothes.

As respect brings brighter face
Not with ill, but energy
Eat a meal, enjoying taste
Earned their self, and glad to be.

Martin's poem won the contest, and soon after he got a job with the Edmonton Food Bank, where he is now employed.



British Columbia

Jean Swanson
End Legislated Poverty

Here's the bad news from BC as of March 6th:

Last fall the government came up with a fancy plan they call BC Benefits, as well as a new law that requires people to live in BC for 3 months before they can get welfare.

Poverty groups were outraged by BC Benefits and the government's sales pitch on it. The plan chops \$46 a month from the poorest people in BC, single, so-called employeables. It slashes \$81 a month from childless couples on welfare and ends the flat-rate earnings exemption for all but people with disabilities. This exemption allowed single parents to keep the