

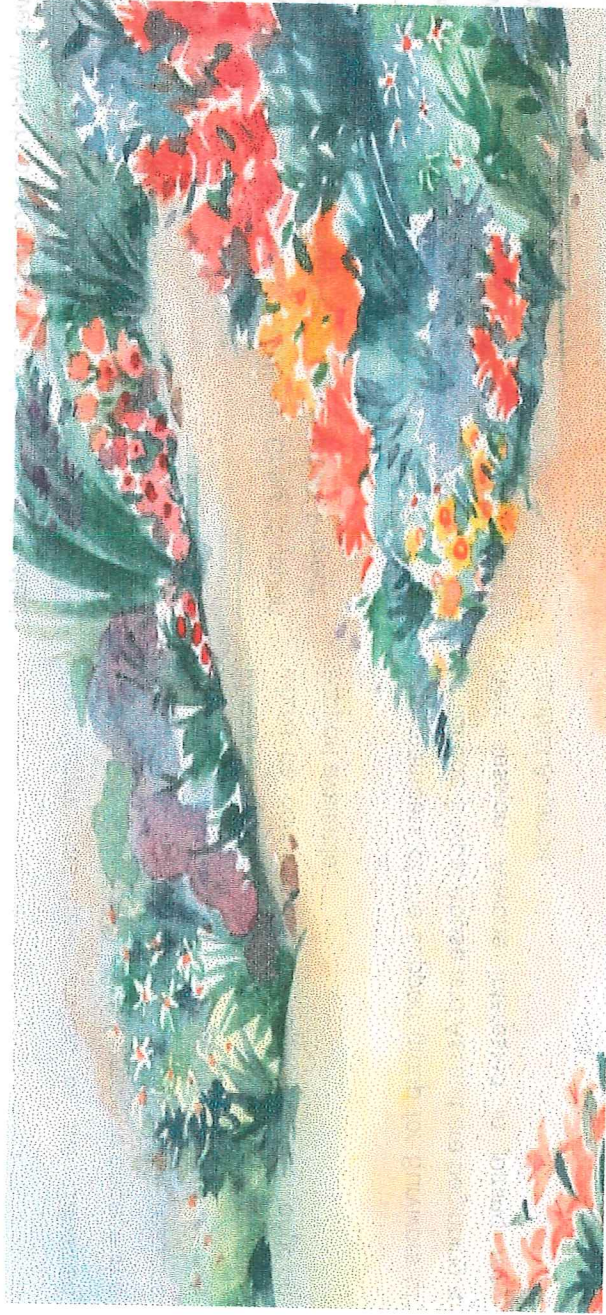
AWAKE



June

Spring Issue

2000



Spring Rainbow

*Golden hills of daffodils
And tulips red and white
Rows of purple irises
Waves in the morning light.*

*Where striped bees stop to drink,
The robin flaunts his bright red vest;
The bluebirds start to sing.*

*I never cease to marvel at
This rainbow that is Spring!
Burst forth in shades of pink;
Dewdrops tiptoe on the grass*

*I never cease to marvel at
This rainbow that is Spring!*

*Marie Savage
Longestown, Ohio*

News from the Centre

In January, Katherine Reed began work on the Women in Transition Project (WIT), a workshop designed to help women learn about the social systems and how these systems directly impact their lives. Workshops are ongoing and anyone interested can contact Katherine for more information. The recent cuts to social programs have made this project particularly relevant to the lives of women in our community.

Amanda Workman was hired as Crisis Support Worker, while Katherine Reed is on the WIT Project.

The Re-entry Program for African Nova Scotia Women is nearing completion and on May 10, the women participating "grandmothered" a World March of Women 2000 event.

The Teens Take Action: A Peer Education Approach to Dating Violence and Sexual Assault has been successfully presented to schools and public alike. The program's positive reception encouraged the inception of a second peer education project.

Teens Take Action: A Peer Education Approach to Drug Awareness is a program in which a group of Grade 8 and 9 students received training and education regarding group facilitation and tobacco, alcohol and cannabis abuse. The teens are now delivering this information to grade 6 students at schools throughout Antigonish. The AWRC partnered with Addiction Services for this program.

Fund-raising to support the Sister Mary Macleod Bursary is currently in Progress. Anyone wishing to

help out by volunteering to sell tickets at the mall can contact Vangie. Ann Sypelek has generously donated a print and Gabrielle's Brisro donated lunch for two.

The Centre has been invited by the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres to engage in a research project designed to examine the reasons behind low reporting and conviction rates for crimes involving violence against women. All interviews would be confidential and supportive with ongoing support available.

The members of the support group for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse and Assault are beginning a new session. Anyone interested in joining may contact Amanda.

The Centre has two students on volunteer work placements this spring, with both women enrolled in Nova Scotia Community College programs. The Library and Information Technology student is upgrading and organizing our library and the Human Services student is proving to be the catalyst for the distribution of the new AWRC pamphlet.

The AWRC wishes to thank the women of Lane A and Plessis Residences at St. FX who took the time to donate their extra clothing and food.

The AWRC wishes to thank volunteer Camel Gallagher and the students and faculty in the Service Learning program at ST. FX who assisted with the Income Tax Program.

Below the Line

PEI Leads Canada, Raises Welfare Rates

Social Assistance rates in Prince Edward Island increased, the first increase anywhere in Canada in five years.

When a still unfinished review of social Assistance levels identified the need for an increase in food and school allowance, the province decided to act immediately, said Health and Social Services Minister Mildred Drover.

The basic food allowance goes up by 10%, an increase of about \$50.00 a month for a family of four. The same increase applies to the food allowance for pregnant women. School allowances- \$75.00 for elementary school children and \$100.00 for grades seven to 12-will be paid and doubled twice a year.

BC Assistance Recipients Can Receive Benefits While Building A Business

People receiving social assistance will be able to remain eligible for benefits while building their own business under new regulations introduced by the Social development and Economic Security Minister Moe Sihota.

The changes will allow someone receiving BC Benefits who is in a self-employment program to accumulate business assets and re-invest business profits without penalty for up to 12 months. People receiving disability benefits will be eligible for exemptions for up to 18 months.

The new program grew out of a peer lending pilot project the province undertook in 1998 with VanCity Credit Union. British Columbia's Community Enterprises program also provides up to \$50,000. Per pilot project for community groups to help them run as many as 14 pilot projects with people from marginalized groups to develop micro enterprises, cooperatives and self employment.

Ontario Introduces Lifetime Welfare Ban

Effective April 1, 2000, any person convicted of Welfare fraud- whether in Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program - will be banned from receiving social assistance for the rest of their life. The government's press released boasts that taxpayers will save an estimated \$38 million by avoiding future payments to those who are made "ineligible" for life.

Nation Anti-Poverty Organization, March 2000

HAMM BUDGET HURTS PEOPLE ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

38,213 Social Assistance Budget Cuts

What Social Assistance Cut-backs are in the budget?

- Family Benefits –the social assistance program for persons with disabilities and single parents – has been done away with. As of May 1, 2000 it no longer exists for people who need it.
- People on Family Benefits as of April 11, 2000, will continue at the "old" rated, but have been notified that they will be cut back to the "new" rates in April, 2001 when the legal system is changed. It appears that the new, one-tier system will be called Income Assistance.
- The "new" Income Assistance rates for applicants who are persons with disabilities and single parents will be 10% less than the "old" rates. Imagine what it would be like to take a 10% decrease in pay when you don't have enough to meet basic needs now.
- These cut-backs take between \$75 to over \$100 per month from social assistance budgets that are already inadequate to meet basic needs. Before this cut, Family Benefits rates in Nova Scotia were about 20% below the poverty line. With the cuts they will be about 30% below the poverty line.
- **The 10% cut back**
 - > reduces all basic assistance rates for food, clothing, miscellaneous essentials, rent and utilities at a time when these costs are going up.
 - > take away transportation and house supplies (from dishes to soap) as items of basic assistance.
- **In addition to the 10% cut back**
 - > The amount people can work will be allowed to make in waged income has been cut by 50%.
 - > Medications and special needs are being taken away. People are getting nasty surprises at Pharmacies when they try to refill prescriptions that were covered up until the budget.

- > Others are being told that special medical needs will now only be provided on an emergency basis.
- > Everything from transportation, to day care, to eye exams will be tied to transitional employment support. Not everyone who has special needs will get help because workers have huge caseloads and will not be able to assess each case.
- > The co-pay for medications for non-disabled recipients has increased by 40%, from \$3 to \$5 per prescription.
- > The co-pay ceiling of \$150 per year per person has been scrapped.

Who is affected by these cut?

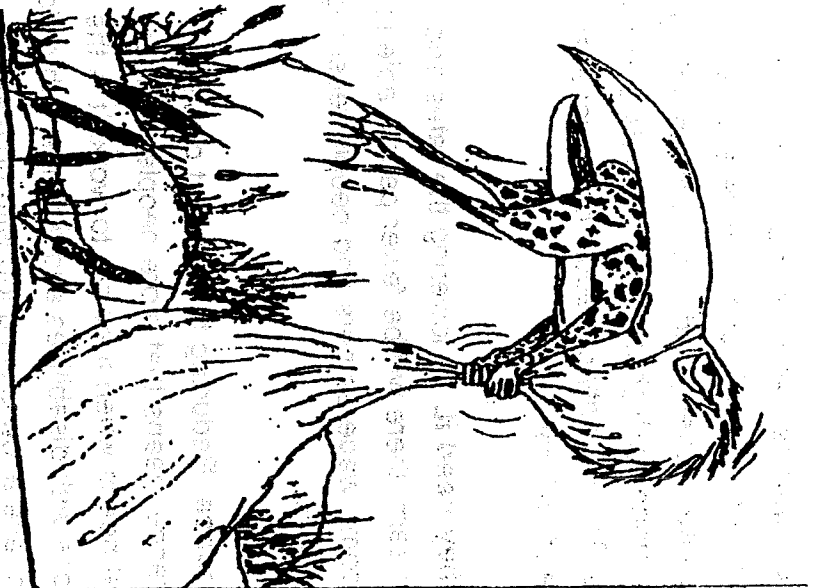
- **More people will go hungry.** Prices for basics such as electricity, fuel oil, medication – to name just a few essentials – have gone up and keep going up in price. More and more people will have to spend food dollars to keep a roof over their heads.
- **More people will be come homeless** – including families and children. CMHC says the average cost of a two bedroom apartment in Halifax is \$600.00 per month. Family Benefits maximum shelter rates for three people is \$603.00 – which must include heat and lights. The New maximum is \$34.00 less, not including heat and lights.
- **People will die without life-sustaining medications.** More people will get sick, get sicker, stay sicker longer. Poverty is a key determinant of health. There are library shelves full of studies that prove the link between poverty and poor nutrition, failing to thrive, doing poorly in school, higher infant mortality, higher risk of all kinds of diseases, higher rate of disabilities, higher death rates. The majority of people on social assistance in Nova Scotia are persons with disabilities and children.
- **Fewer people will qualify for help when they need it.** By lowering the rates and reducing the amount of wages a person can earn, there will be fewer people able to get assistance. This will hit single parent low-income wage earners and people receiving Canada Pension disability benefits especially hard.
- **Fewer people will be able to get off assistance.** Reducing the amount of wages someone can earn and still qualify for assistance means that more people will lose medical coverage and other essential special needs when they get to work. It is the loss of these additional benefits which traps persons with disabilities and families with children on the system. It is too risky and too scary to take a low-paying job with no medical coverage.



- **Health care, shelters and other social services will be in greater demand. People will lose their children or have to give them up.** Cutting social assistance rates puts a terrible strain on other services – especially health care, shelters for the homeless people and child welfare services.
- **People will resort to begging, borrowing and stealing.** Panhandling and begging on the streets will increase. Charity will be in greater demand. Churches and food banks will be overwhelmed with calls for assistance. Shoplifting and other petty crimes will increase as people are forced to steal to provide food and other necessities.

(Prepared by Dalhousie Legal Aid Services, 2209 Gottingen Street, Halifax, 1 902 423- 8105)

DON'T EVER GIVE UP !



**ATLANTIC
CANADA HAS
MORE PEOPLE
WITH HOUSING
PROBLEMS
THAN MOST
OTHER AREAS
OF CANADA.**

WILL RALPH KLEIN SOUND THE DEATH-KNELL OF MEDICARE

Since the introduction of Medicare, all Canadians have enjoyed the right to equitable health care delivery. However, the introduction of the Canada Health and Social Transfer in 1996 meant that provincial governments were faced with radically reduced federal funding. The responsibility for sustaining the increasingly burdened health care system thus fell more on the shoulders of the provinces.

Foreseeing the federal government's withdrawal in health care delivery, the Alberta Tories have aggressively sought ways to increase the role of private health care service providers in the province since 1995.

On March 2, 2000, acting on the provisions in the 1996 agreement, the Alberta government tabled Bill 11, the "health Care Protection Act." Among other features, Bill 11 provides for private hospitals to conduct surgical procedures that require overnight stays. The Tories indicated that the Bill was developed to allow health authorities to let private hospitals perform services such as hip replacements and cataract surgery in order to reduce chronic waiting list problems and to maintain control over private health care providers.

Articles in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine have demonstrated that private health care costs more and is less efficient. A February report from the Edmonton Sun_Journal stated that the leading private health care company currently operating in Alberta-HRG Health Resource Group-lost \$2.1 million in 1998-99, its first full fiscal year. An astounding 36 percent of total spending to "start up cost." HGR operates in Alberta with the goals of offering health services to government agencies, building mutually beneficial strategic alliances with industry, and offering "complementary" health services.

Several ethical concerns have arisen from the introduction of Bill 11. If overnight stays are permitted, for-profit clinics may tend to release patients early in an effort to save costs. A new report from the health ethics department at the University of Alberta states that patients are at risk if they are prematurely released after many procedures. In addition, this report indicates concern over statements from Calgary Regional Health Authority that these clinics will not require fully-equipped operating rooms. Bill 11 will allow patients who are able to pay more to



receive "advanced" surgeries at the same facilities by the same doctors.

Richard Plain, a health economist at the University of Alberta, told the Ottawa Citizen in February that the Alberta Approach would allow physicians to recommend additional private services on top of insured medicare services. Patients could be billed directly for some services while Medicare covers others. Traditionally, Canadian doctors have been forced to choose between offering services and receiving payment in full from the government or risk removing themselves completely from that system, forcing them to find their own private patients and to make sure those patients pay their bills.

A report from the University of British Columbia's Centre for Health and Policy research in March of this year attributed lengthy waiting lists and unmet patient needs in Alberta largely to the fact that Alberta spends six percent less than the Canadian average on per capita hospital expenses.

The question remains how and why the Federal government continues to defend the Alberta Legislation. In the early stages of the introduction of the Bill, Federal Health Minister Allen Rock expressed his concern about the legislation and indicated his preference for withdrawal.

The Canadian Union for Employees commissioned Vancouver lawyer Steven Shrybman, an expert on international trade, to draft a legal opinion on the impacts of Bill 11 under the NAFTA. In his report, Shrybman indicates that there is "significant risks that the province's experiment would quickly escape whatever bounds it may have intended."

He emphasizes the root of the problem is that federal government did not negotiate a board exclusion of health care under the NAFTA. As a result, if the federal government allows the Alberta Legislation to pass Bill 11, it could seriously undermine the ability of the federal and provincial government to "protect public health care from the challenges that all too readily can arise under NAFTA's enforcement regime."

In other words, the enactment of Bill 11 under the NAFTA could mean no government in Canada would be able to stop the floodgates of for-profit health care from setting up shop across the country.

Under NAFTA, American corporations must be treated at least as well as Canadian corporations. Any favoritism to Canadian delivery systems can be considered an unfair trade barrier and can be submitted as a challenge to a NAFTA trade tribunal. Therefore, once private American clinics are established, there is a very good chance that the federal government will be faced with no longer regulating the health care system.



How this drama continues to unfold remains to be seen. One thing is clear, Klein's Bill 11 is not just an Alberta issue, but one that affects all of us. Canadians must demand that the federal government intervene to protect the rights of all citizens and preserve the intent of the Canada Health Act.

Loretta Gerlach is the Prairie Organizer with the Council of Canadians.
From Briarpatch vol 29 number 4, May 2000

Government Of Canada To Amend Legislation To Modernize Benefits And Obligations

OTTAWA, February 11, 2000 -- Today, on behalf of the Government of Canada, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada Anne McLellan introduced in the House of Commons an omnibus Bill (The Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act) that will amend 68 federal statutes to extend benefits and obligations to same-sex couples on the same basis as common-law opposite-sex couples.

The Bill will amend legislation to recognize the principle of equal treatment for all common-law relationships under federal law in relation to benefits and obligations. Same-sex partners will be included in the definition of common-law partners and they will be granted the same benefits and obligations.

The Supreme Court of Canada has made it clear that governments cannot limit benefits or

obligations to opposite-sex common-law relationships. Several provinces have changed or are in the process of reviewing their laws to comply with the Charter.

The legislation affects 20 departments and agencies and is sponsored jointly by Minister McLellan, Minister of Finance Paul Martin, President of Treasury Board Lucienne Robillard, Minister of Human Resources Development Jane Stewart and Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Elinor Caplan.

The legislative reforms are part of an ongoing commitment by the Government of Canada to ensure that its policies and programs continue to reflect the values of Canadians, values that are enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"These changes are about fairness. They will

ensure that all common-law relationships receive equal treatment under the law," said Minister McLellan. "This Bill provides a responsible, balanced and legally sound framework within which to address recent court decisions and to ensure that both benefits and obligations are applied to common-law relationships, same-sex and opposite-sex," added Minister McLellan.

"As an employer, the Government of Canada already provides pension and other benefits to unmarried couples, whether they are same-sex or opposite-sex," pointed out Minister Robillard. "The amendments we have tabled are consistent with the fair approach that has characterized our relations with our employees," she added.

"The fiscal impact of these amendments will be minimal if anything at all," indicated Minister Martin. "This is not a cost issue."

"Canada has always been seen as a beacon of tolerance and fairness; the changes these amendments imply for our laws will reaffirm our status as one of the most progressive nations of the world," Minister Caplan stated.

"These amendments are not a one-way street. While they will result in new benefits being extended to same-sex couples, they will also impose on them new obligations. This is both fair and appropriate," mentioned Minister Stewart.

The legislative changes will preserve the fundamental importance of marriage in Canadian society; the definition of marriage will not change.

The Bill includes amendments to federal laws on benefits like the Old Age Security Act and the Canada Pension Plan, as well as tax obligations and benefits under the Income Tax Act.

The Bill

The omnibus legislation would extend benefits and obligations to same-sex common-law couples on the same basis as opposite-sex common-law couples. Sixty-eight statutes involving some 20 departments are affected. Amendments will be made to statute such as the Income Tax Act, the Canada Pension Plan, the Criminal Code and the Old Age Security Act.

The proposed legislation maintains the clear distinction between married and unmarried relationships and, wherever possible, uses neutral terms and language to define relationships and the partners in them. The term "spouse" refers to married couples only, and the term "common-law partner" encompasses people in common-law relationships, both same-sex and opposite-sex.

The definition of marriage has not changed. The Government of Canada has no intention of changing the legal definition of marriage. Although a few European countries have limited recognition of same-sex relationships, a clear distinction is maintained in the law between marriage and same-sex partnerships.

The changes are balanced obligations as well as benefits will be conferred on same-sex couples. The fiscal impact of these amendments will be minimal if any at all.

Personal Thoughts from Nicole Rozier

It'll soon be a year ago ... When I think back on where I was a year ago ... in my mind, in my heart, in the very core of my being.... I remember someone who I have now left far behind. At the same time, that person is not forgotten ... and I am well aware that had it not been for all her pains and hurts and sufferings that I would not be where I am today. When I look back on that person I am proud of her ... I do not look at now and see all the rewards... yet I think of way back when... when it was that I had the courage to set out on this journey of reconstructioning myself.

When I think back on March 18th, 1999.... I think of a lot of things ... the people that I have met since then, the opportunities that I have had, the friends that I found ... I think of being the catalyst to awakening me from my paralysis.

That is to say the fear that I was living in ... the fear of living life, the fear of rejection, the need for acceptance. From that moment on the momentum of my life was forever changed ... and I choose at that time ... my lowest weakest point in my life... to take the road less travelled by ... and it truly has made all the difference.

I gave myself the best gift... to find myself, to love that person and to go after what it is that I want.

It is a time of mourning the passing of a loved one ... someone that has been with me for 22 years. someone that has shared with me more pains and hurts and harboured more sorrow than I thought imaginable. It is the passing of someone who was strong beyond acknowledgement, and beautiful, and loved. On that day I will remember a very wonderful person upon whose tears, the foundation of my future has been built. I will remember how had the courage and the strength to heal and pass all the life on to me. On this the anniversary I will celebrate the meeting of a woman I love very much...

Myself !

Unclean

lying there outside myself
I became the uncleaned
One of millions, condemned
Daily battling the sight of my wretched self
Knowing the disgusting, trash I am
Wholly unwanted - by at the very least myself.
Lying there I yielded everything.
Smug, violent eyes kicked me aside
Laughed when he had conquered,
Satisfied of his ownership of me.

That was then -
Yesterday you owned me
Yesterday you degraded me
Yesterday you sucked the life from my heart
Yesterday you poisoned my future
Yesterday you raped my love, myself

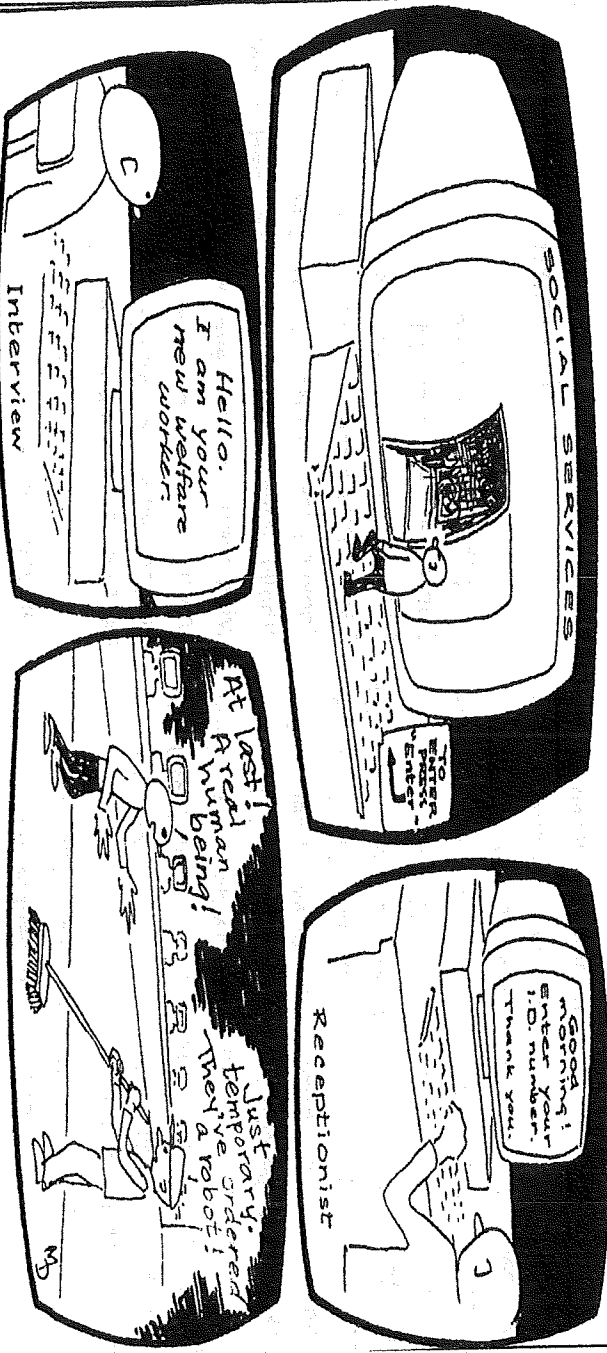
But today - not today...
I stand here in the glory of who I am
I stand here in everything I have experienced
I stand here and know -
I am a good clean woman
I am beautiful and viracious

The Rape

I am your new born daughter,
Your favorite aunt, your aged mother
I am your beloved sister. your neice in pig tails
Your grandmother,
I am your poster girl
Your waitress, your nurse
I am the teacher you had a crush on in grade school
The girl next door
The one who sits beside you in class.
I am class president
Your validictorian ...
I am the girl you fall in love with.

BEEP...BEEP...BEEP...

Your benefits have been terminated



If Anderson Consulting and the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services get their way, that ominous beep beep sound could be coming soon to a welfare office near you! A highly automated computer system is being developed to take over many duties now performed by welfare workers.

Not only will each have its own ID number, but each person in each family will have one too. Drug benefits will be provided through a "smart card" usable at any drug store, and it's handy for, the welfare office to stop the drug benefit mid-month if they have found a reason to cut the person off assistance.

Filing an application will take two appointments. First is intake screening and if you make it past that first stage, next is intake verification. To set the stage for this new system, more and more information about applicants will be available on computer, from the welfare offices and even other government programs, federal as well as provincial.

Many people will find themselves communicating with something called IVR (Interactive Voice Response) when they call to speak to their worker. The IVR will be programmed to answer so-called common questions about entitlement and will even take information from those reporting straightforward income and earning. The system will flag the worker if any information seems questionable.

Even the process of interviewing files will be automated, with the system alerting the worker if it has determined that a particular case is high risk. Both frequency and intensity of file reviews will be decided by the computer, which includes the Welfare Fraud Control data base also, as well..

As scary as this sounds, it may never become implemented in full. Given the Anderson and MCSS record so far, in the welfare computer system, we just might have a new government before we see any of this! Let's hope

By Deb O'Connor

Advocacy and Resource Guide

In the summer of 1999, two women's organizations discovered that they were working on the very similar projects and decided to combine their efforts and resources.

Naomi Society for Victims of Family Violence, a community based agency which provides support and advocacy services for women and their children who have lived with violence, had Dawn Ross, a student working as a summer research assistance, review, organize and update existing in office advocacy resources.

At the same time Women Standing Up!, a low-income women's group which formed as part of a Status of Women Canada project sponsored by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre were developing a booklet for women like themselves. They realized that one of the biggest problems low-income people face is a lack of basic information about getting support.

These two groups worked together to create this booklet, which gives general information



regarding financial, legal, counseling, employment, child abuse, housing, and support services that are available to women and the general public. It is intended for Antigonish area residents, however, there are contact numbers for other areas.

You may obtain a copy of this booklet at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre or Naomi Society for Victims of Family Violence.

Women Standing Up!

DAY CARE IN DENMARK

Danish day care has reached a new high. In Copenhagen, a day care facility was set up which provides new services for busy working families. Not only will the day care staff provide care for children, they will also do the laundry, shop for groceries, and provide reasonably-priced take-out meals.

Parents can bring in three bags of laundry per day and a list of groceries to buy. At the end of the day, they can pick up their children, clean clothes and food.

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