

Shoestring Survival

...A PRODUCTION OF

THE ANTI-GONISH SINGLE MOTHERS' ASSOCIATION

INSIDE

MANIFESTO

We are "low-income" people. We are the women, men and children of the Antigoniish area who fight a war against poverty. We are the secret service - secret because we fight this war that only we (and a few other concerned people) are aware of. Our ammunition is information, education, friendship, personal strength, and self-respect. We are not equally armed, and we are not adequately armed, but we have no choice but to go on dodging the bullets of discrimination, criticism and lack of understanding. We have no choice but to suffer encounters with the land mines of cheques not arriving in the mail and services being cut off because the bill wasn't paid on time. Worst of all is the big bomb - running out of food money - having to swallow your pride and go beg for money or food.

Why do these things happen to us? Is it unemployment? an inhumane minimum wage? men who abandon their children? childhood abuse that scars the spirit? lack of education? The reasons are many and sometimes they bog us down, but sometimes we have to take a long, hard look at them, and deal with them, if we can ever hope to rise above.

Shoestring Survival will help us to look at these issues. It will allow us to exchange information and learn from each other. It will help us to regain our self-respect and our strength. It will educate the people who are concerned about poverty and it's root causes. It will help us learn how the battle can be won when we combine our efforts.

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INVITATION TO SINGLE MOTHERS

Name _____

FEES:

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Send to: Antigoniish Womens Resource Centre
219 Main St., Suite 204B
Antigoniish, N.S.
B2G 2C1

Regular: \$10.00
Low-Income: \$ 3.00
Sustaining: \$25.00

AWA HOUSING PROJECT

Recently the Antigonish Women's Association conducted a survey of rental housing in the Town of Antigonish. The project was undertaken in order to and document housing problems being brought to the attention of the Women's Resource Centre by women using the services of the Centre.

Some of the major findings of the study were that rental housing in Antigonish is very expensive, many people surveyed had difficulty in getting their landlord to do repairs promptly and adequately, many units had serious structural problems, and renters are paying very high heat bills because the unit is not insulated properly.

Unfortunately there is still the idea among some people in Antigonish that there are no problems with housing here. The following are some of the things renters had to say which will show that there certainly is a problem.

"The situation is like this because people get away with it. There isn't enough conscious opposition. We need a voice. The only time something gets done here is when it is made public. We need some kind of mixed housing. I don't think putting all the single mothers in one group is good. Women are always treated like second-class citizens. We'll never make as much as men do but we shouldn't be living in rat holes."

"People need to be told. They need to be aware and know that kids are getting sick from living in dumps. There are rats in some apartments. We need to really push for more social housing."

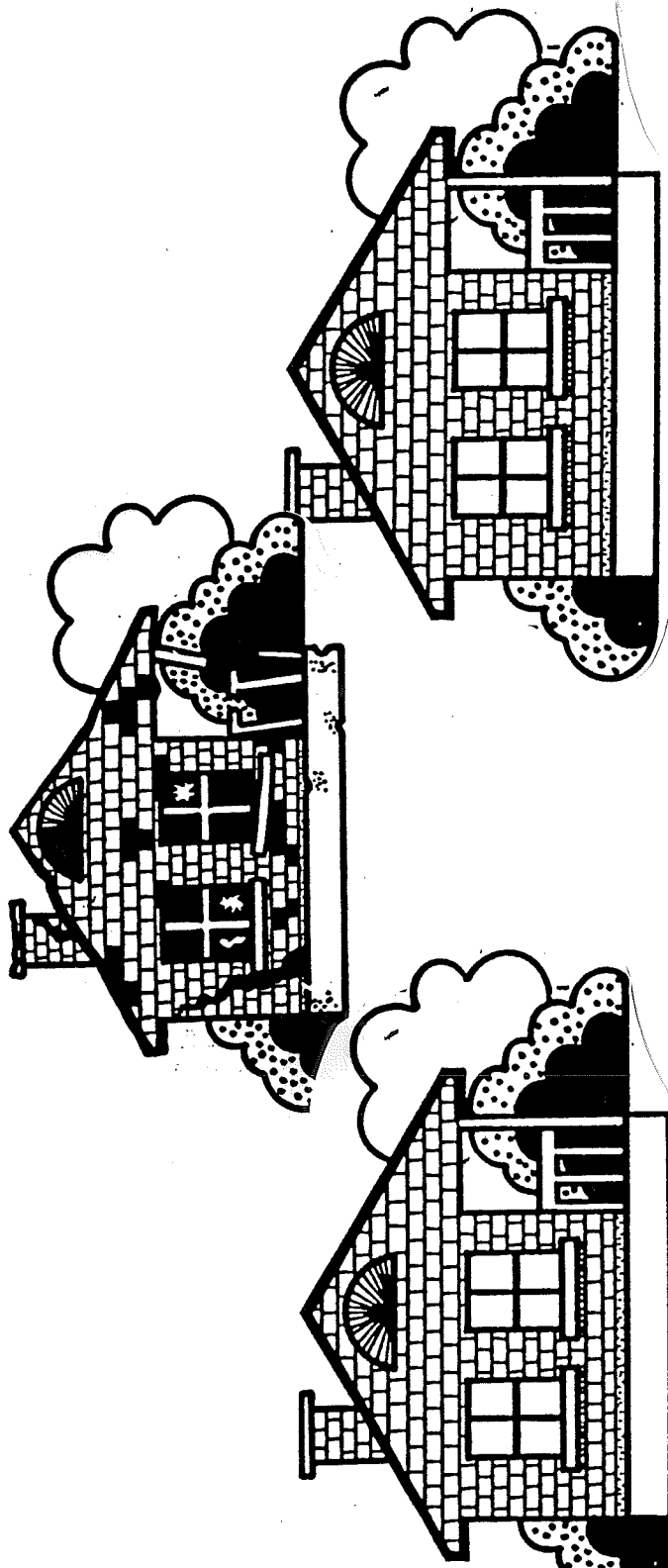
"I felt alot of discrimination. One caretaker used to make fun of me in the summer time because I'm Black. He'd say "Look at those legs. They look like burnt stovepipes"."

"I took my furniture when I left, but I found myself homeless. I couldn't find anyone who would rent me an apartment because of the things my ex-husband was saying about me. I was married for ten years and I was never in any trouble but since I got divorced it's a different story."

"I called to get an apartment and told them I was on social assistance. I was immediately asked "how are you going to pay your rent?". I said "Thank you." and hung up. I was angry and hurt. I've been renting for the last 13 years and have always paid my rent."

Shame, discrimination, economic stress, and feelings of failure come through in these comments. Should decent, affordable housing be a right in a country as wealthy as Canada? Should the poor be punished because they have trouble coping in a system where the odds are stacked against them? Isn't it the children who pay the biggest price in all of this? Shouldn't we be doing something?

Helen Richards
Katherine Reed



In the fall of 1989 the Antagonish-
Womens Resource Centre first came up
with the idea for a Single Mothers
Support Group. The need was deter-
mined by the numbers of single
mothers the Centre came in contact
with.

We first met as a group in March of 1990 and have met on a weekly basis since that time.

The group has provided a confidential space for single moms to voice their concerns and opinions without fear of being criticized.

This lessens the burden of feeling isolated and alone. The women who participate in the group offer support and understanding through mutual respect.

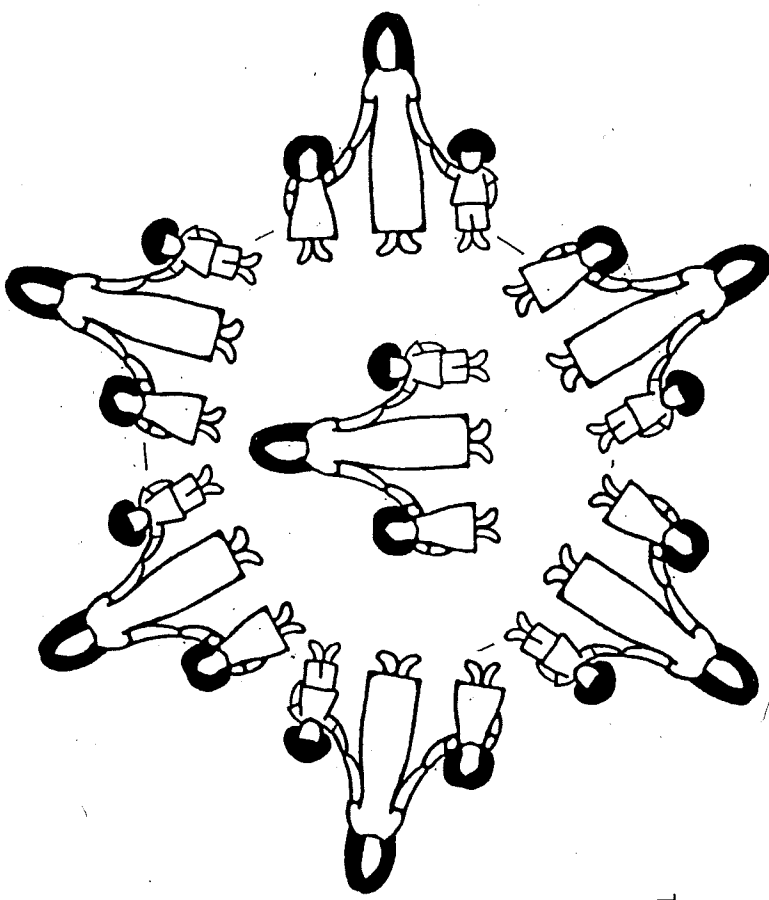
In December 1990 we staged a demonstration (along with other concerned individuals) in front of Town Hall to protest the inhumane municipal welfare rates. We sang Christmas carols and read personal accounts of hardships suffered due to the policies of the municipality. The demo was very well covered by the media and we felt it was a great success.

Over the past year the group has attended several workshops. These include money management, body image, assertiveness training vocational training and much more. The group also provides a source of entertainment with the occasional movie and the good humour of its members.

We are now registered with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies as the Antigonish Single Mothers Association (ASMA).

We plan to continue producing 'Shoestring Survival' and to improve wherever possible. We plan to raise funds to help provide some recreational activities for low income families in our community.

We continue to support each other through personal crises and hope to grow as a group as well as individually.



Helen Richards
Judy Johnson

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CHILDREN IN POVERTY

Children make up the single largest group of poor people in Canada. More than one million children were growing up in poverty in Canada in 1986 - an increase of 120,000 children since 1980. Parental unemployment is the main cause of poverty, however, working families are not immune to poverty. Today's children need to grow up in secure social and economic circumstances if they are to participate fully in society as tomorrow's wage earners, taxpayers and parents.

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SO ALONE

From the very beginning, the start of my existence I've been different

"Oh", you say, "is that so, aren't we all"

yes but no

Yes we all have different traits, ambitions ideas, likes and dislikes

but no

I see things different, I've been through too much

"Oh", you say, "is that so, haven't we all"

yes but no

Yes we've all had problems, some with more than me some with less

but no

I don't belong, I never have, I know too much, but have so much to ask

Some how for some strange reason I've landed in the wrong time and place

I love, but never enough
I love, but not long enough

It seems I kill whatever I touch

"Oh", you say, "is that so haven't we all had times of confusion, times when things never make sense"

yes but no

Yes we all have gone through that, I understand what you mean

but no

YOU! don't understand, can't you see that's part of it, part of it all

No one understands no one can because

"From the very beginning, the start of my existence I've been different....."

Rhonda

MY PRAYER TO GOD

Dear God,

There is this man I fell in love with when I was a little girl. For as long as I can remember he was there when I needed him. Then one day he went away. I know where he is but I can't see him nor can I hardly talk to him.

He is married to this woman who seems to have really strong ties on him. I want this man back in my life. I haven't seen him for one year, before that it was two years.

I feel that if things don't change the next time I will see him is when there is a death in our family. I pray that this is not the only thing that will bring my daddy home.

Dear God, I hope this is not asking for too much, but I only want to see my daddy.

Love,

Brenda Tatlock

Wake up Spring
Oh little blue bird
I've found at last
Did you hear the weather
forecast.

We need you at home to bring
up the flowers

We need you at home to make trees
tall as towers

We need you home to bring up the
plants.

We even need you at home to encourage
the ants

We need you home

to beautifully sing,

a beautiful song,

to wake up spring

Jennifer
Hines
age 8

WELFARE RATES TOO LOW

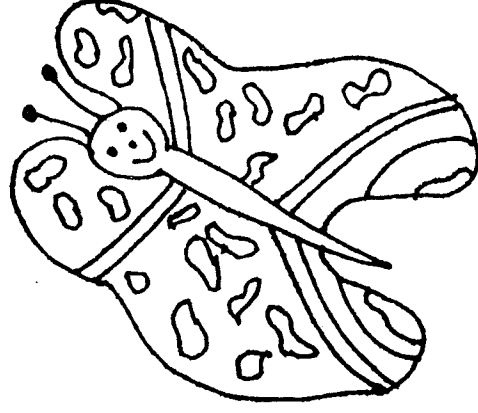
In December of 1990 a group of welfare recipients and concerned citizens staged a public awareness demonstration in front of the Antigonish Town Hall to call attention to unreasonably low rates of social assistance. The group sang Christmas carols and read the stories and comments of people suffering because of this situation. A fact sheet was prepared by the Women's Association which exposed some of the major problems welfare recipients are having.

The fact sheet showed that in the Antigonish area, some families are receiving less than half of what they actually need for food. Shelter rates also fall well below what the real costs are, and clothing allowances are too low as well. A single parent family, made up of two children and the parent would get \$165 per month for food. According to the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council, this family would actually need at least \$350. As for shelter expenses, a grand total of \$400 is allowed for rent, heat, lights, and household supplies. The average price of a two-bedroom apartment in the town of Antigonish is \$541 including heat and lights. It is very near to impossible to find a two-bedroom apartment in this town for less than \$400 per month, without utilities included. For clothing, \$48 per month would be allowed for the entire family.

Some people would argue that it is OK to have very low welfare rates because municipal welfare is short term assistance. This is simply not true. A woman who is abandoned by her husband must wait at least 6 months before she can apply for provincial assistance. She must survive somehow on these incredibly low allowances and if she earns any money at all she must report it to her worker and it will be deducted from her welfare, dollar-for-dollar. If she earned \$100 and paid out \$50 for a babysitter, \$100 would be taken from her welfare. There is nothing in our welfare policy that requires case workers to take babysitting expenses into account.

The municipal councils are looking at increasing these rates now. This will be the first increase in over 5 years. Welfare rates are a well-kept secret, so most people think recipients are getting more than they need. This mistaken belief is one factor that keeps the voting public from supporting the idea of raising rates. Information is power and that old saying certainly applies in this case. If you would like more information about this problem contact the Antigonish Single Mothers' Association at 863-6221.

Katherine Reed



From

Symptoms of Inner Peace

Be on the lookout for symptoms of Inner peace. The hearts of a great many have already been exposed to Inner peace and it is possible that people everywhere could come down with it in epidemic proportions. This could pose a serious threat to what has, up to now, been a fairly stable condition of conflict in the world.

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Some signs and symptoms of Inner peace:

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A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experience.

An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.

A loss of interest in judging other people.

A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others.

A loss of interest in conflict.

A loss of the ability to worry. (This is a very serious symptom.)

Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation.

Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.

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Frequent attacks of smiling.

An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen.

An increased susceptibility to the love extended by others as well as the uncontrollable urge to love them back.

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***** I N V I T A T I O N *****

The Single Mothers Support Group meets weekly. If you are a single mom and would like to join or would like more information call:

863 - 6221
