

CARING FOR THE POOR



Claude Snow
February 10, 2018

HOW DID THE ISSUE OF POVERTY END UP IN THE HANDS OF TOURISM?



John Ames
Minister of Tourism
was appointed minister
responsible for the Reduction
of poverty in NB
on September 5, 2017

SOCIETY IS LIKE A BOX OF 40 CRAYONS



- Officially, only the top row lives in poverty (6 out of 40).
- Taking into consideration the many limitations people have, we must add another row and a half.
- These people also live in some kind of poverty, which totals up to 17 out of 40 altogether.

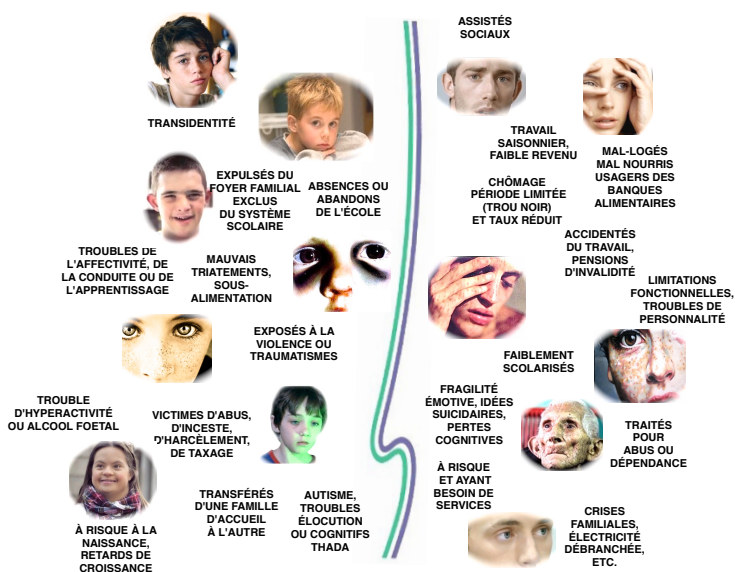
LET'S HAVE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE WORLD OF THE POOR



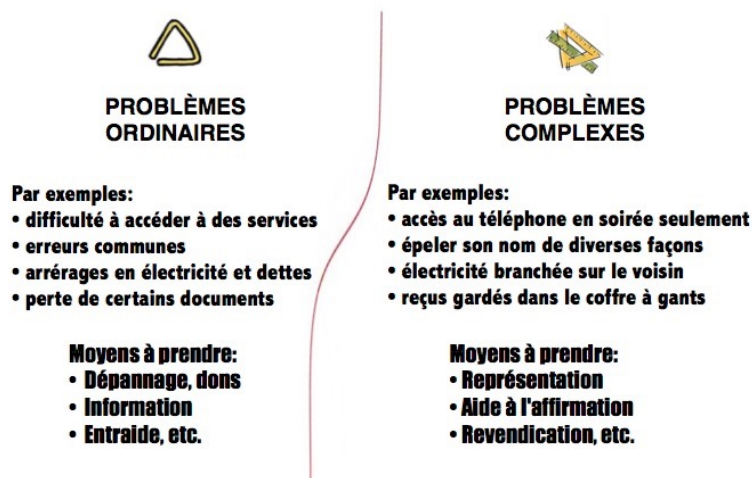
- Generally speaking, when people talk about the poor, they think of their lack of money and their large debts.
- They tend to forget that there is much more to it than that.
- Illiteracy, disorganization, insecurity, anxiety, isolation, rejection are also present in the lives of the poor and these barriers are worse than the lack of money.

THERE ARE MANY OTHER FACTORS THAN FINANCIAL OR MEDICAL

- Although the financial and medical aspects are important in the lives of the poor, such a simplification is an understatement.
- Up to 3 out of 10 children, and 7 out of 10 adults, have some kind of limitations.
- It may involve a wide range of behavior and learning problems on the part of the children, difficulties at home or at school and various incidents of physical, sexual or emotional abuse.
- The adults may also experience different kinds of hardship, some are vulnerable, have a low degree of schooling or training, have personality disorders or emotional problems.

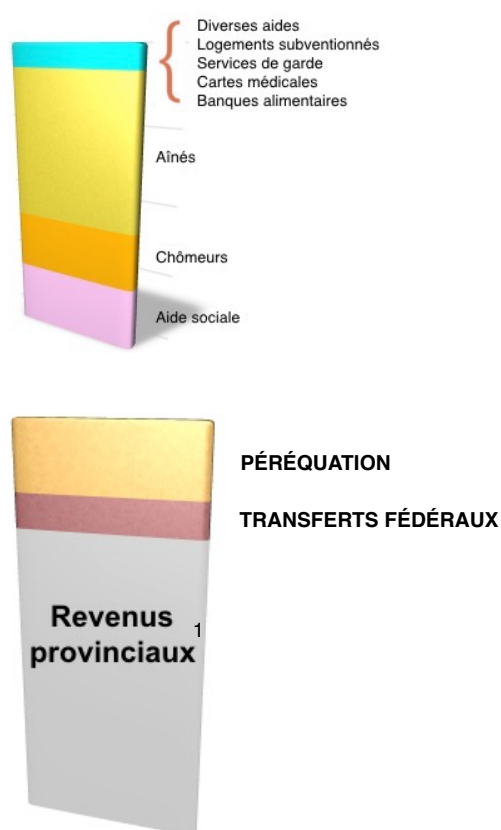


LET'S GO DEEPER AND LOOK AT THE UNDERLYING CAUSES



- Researchers have found out that complex problems are very much different than simple problems.
- Simple problems are related to such things as accessibility of resources, making common errors or being overburdened with debts.
- Complex problems are related to difficulties at a much deeper level such as in terms of understanding, adapting or getting organized.
- Information and hand-outs may be sufficient in resolving simple problems, but complex problems require advocacy, empowerment skills and making various demands.

THE POOR: A THIRD OF THE POPULATION BUT NB IS ALSO A POOR PROVINCE



- Many people depend on the government for their income, be it social assistance, unemployment, old age pensions, subsidized housing, day care, medical cards and food banks.
- NB is considered a poor province. Approximately a quarter of its budget comes from Ottawa (equalization payments and federal transfers for health and social services).

40% OF THE ELDERLY ARE POOR



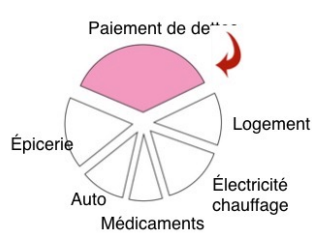
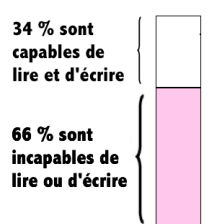
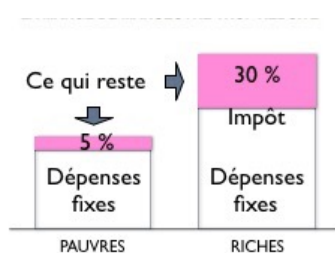
- 40% of the elderly are considered to be in the low-income bracket.
- They draw the Guaranteed Income Supplement which is only allocated to those having a low income.
- All those on a low fixed income are affected by the widening gap between their income and the cost of living.

DISCREPANCY BETWEEN INCOME AND COST OF LIVING

Entrée de fonds	Sortie de fonds																				
Aide sociale	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr><td>Logement</td><td style="text-align: right;">400 \$</td></tr> <tr><td>Nourriture</td><td style="text-align: right;">200 \$</td></tr> <tr><td>Électricité, téléphone</td><td style="text-align: right;">120 \$</td></tr> <tr><td>Vêtements, transport</td><td style="text-align: right;">60 \$</td></tr> <tr><td>Articles ménagers</td><td style="text-align: right;">20 \$</td></tr> <tr><td>Soins personnels, entretien</td><td style="text-align: right;">40 \$</td></tr> <tr><td>Médicaments non couverts</td><td style="text-align: right;">20 \$</td></tr> <tr><td>Paievements de dettes</td><td style="text-align: right;">40 \$</td></tr> <tr><td>Autres dépenses</td><td style="text-align: right;">37 \$</td></tr> <tr><td>TOTAL:</td><td style="text-align: right;">937 \$</td></tr> </table>	Logement	400 \$	Nourriture	200 \$	Électricité, téléphone	120 \$	Vêtements, transport	60 \$	Articles ménagers	20 \$	Soins personnels, entretien	40 \$	Médicaments non couverts	20 \$	Paievements de dettes	40 \$	Autres dépenses	37 \$	TOTAL:	937 \$
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TOTAL: 537 \$																					

- A single person on assistance gets \$537 per month.
- The basic expenses for this person amounts to \$937 per month, which means twice their income.
- No wonder they become desperate, they are left in an illogical situation.

WHAT MAKES THE POOR SO VULNERABLE AND ANXIOUS



- With the poor, there is a 5% leeway, after the basic expenses are paid. It is twice as much for the rich.
- About 66% of the population has very low skills in reading and writing.
- Since the expenses are way higher than the income, people make up the difference by lending money here and there. About a third of their income is spent in reimbursing debts.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

A QUESTION OF REDISTRIBUTION

Partage égal



Partage selon le mérite



Partage selon le droit



Partage variable



- There are different types of justice. The most common is equal sharing. Everyone receives the same.
- Another type is sharing according to merit. Those who make a greater effort get more.
- Another type is the legal sharing. Everyone gets what they have the right to get by law.
- Finally, there is the unequal sharing where those who need more get more.
- Equal sharing is not fair when the needs differ.

OUR CANADIAN SOCIAL VALUES HAVE BEEN ENSHRINED IN THE CONSTITUTION



Constitution

- Égalité des chances
- Services comparables
- Péréquation (redistribution)

- The following principles are in the Constitution:
 - Equal opportunities
 - Comparable services
 - Equalization (redistribution)

UN MINIMUM VITAL ASSURÉ DU BERCEAU AU TOMBEAU



Loi R.A.P.C.

- Financement public
- Gestion publique
- Normes de qualité

- The Canada Assistance Plan was adopted in 1966 and revoked in 1995. It had the following features:
 - Public financing
 - Public administration
 - Quality standards

A PUBLIC SYSTEM IS THE ONLY WAY TO ENSURE A FAIR PROTECTION

- Personal initiatives to combat poverty are based on:
 - Free choice
 - Generosity
 - Variable access
 - Variable financing
 - Unequal quality of service
 - ‘Good families’ are rewarded

- Public services are based on:
 - Obligation to share
 - Legislated right to assistance
 - Universality
 - Secured financing
 - Quality standards
 - Eligibility criteria

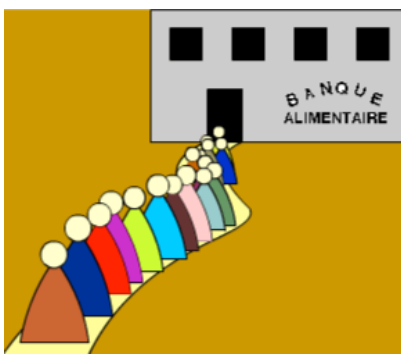
INITIATIVES PERSONNELLES	AIDE PUBLIQUE
Libre choix	Partage obligatoire
Générosité	Droit légal au secours
Accès variable	Universalité
Financement fluctuant	Financement sécurisé
Qualité de service inégale	Qualité selon les normes
Aide aux «bonnes» familles pauvres	Critères d'admissibilité

FAIRNESS IS A QUESTION OF CONSCIENCE AND NATURAL JUSTICE

Information	Fournir à l'appelant la preuve intégrale avant son audience pour qu'il puisse se défendre
Langue	Délai d'attente équivalent pour une réponse, que la correspondance soit en anglais ou en français
Transport	Établir dans la règle des indemnités différentes, variant selon les disparités
Interurbains	Installer des lignes 1-800 pour que les régions éloignées aient le même accès gratuit que les régions immédiates

- Examples of fair rules
 - To provide complete information to appellant before the hearing
 - To establish various transportation rates according to the existence of public transportation facilities
 - To install 1-800 numbers in public offices so that all citizens have free access

WHAT GOVERNMENT WANTS: MORE GOOD SAMARITANS



- An open hand, as kind as it may be, can never replace a public social assistance system.
- The good Samaritan approach is necessary when the government is absent or unable to face poverty issues, but the deeper people go into their pockets, the more the government pulls away and the rules remain the same.

THE SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMS SUFFERED QUITE A BLOW IN 1995



Jean Chrétien

RETOUR AUX PAROISSES?	
Avant 1930	Paroisses, aumône, taxes locales
1930-1995	Construction du filet de sécurité, régime fiscal
Depuis 1995	Trous dans le filet
À l'avenir	Plus de filet du tout?

- In 1995, the federal government has adopted an Act which resulted in cutting the transfers to the provinces, up to \$6B per year.
- Before 1930, the poor had to rely on the parishes, alms and local taxes for an income.
- From 1930 to 1995, we saw the construction of a social security safety net, financed through the fiscal system.
- Since 1995, there are more and more holes in the safety net.
- What will happen eventually?
There may not be any net at all.

SOME PEOPLE ADVOCATE AGAINST SOCIAL PROTECTION



André Bédard,
ex-prés. Banque nationale



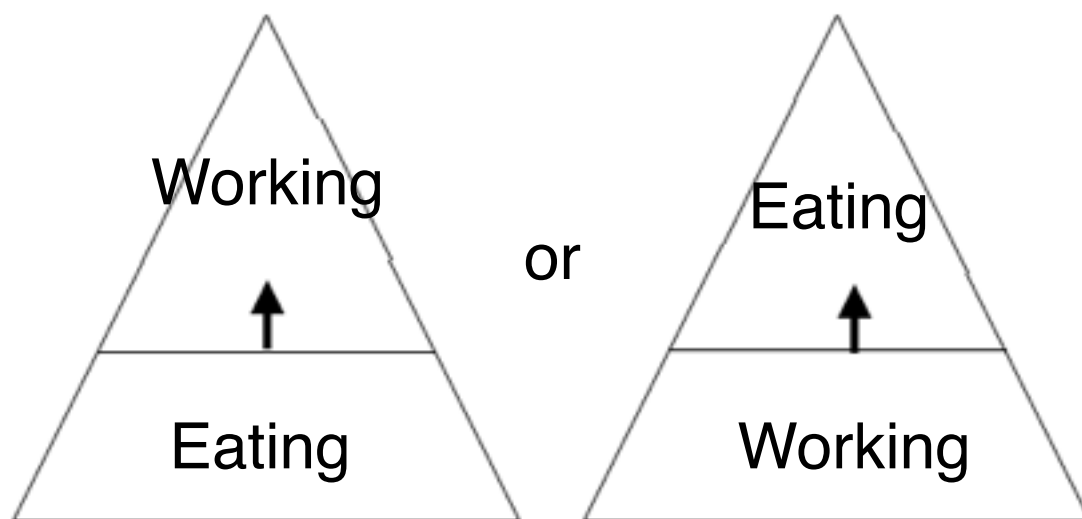
Keith Godin,
Institut Fraser



Edward Younkins

- Based on the theory that those who work have more merit than those who don't, some advocate for more protection for those who work.
- They claim, for instance, that unemployment benefits should not be given to seasonal workers and that they should be expatriated to more prosperous regions.
- Some say that those who are on a minimum wage are mostly teens living with their parents.
- Others stick to their individual freedom which, they say, comes from God and cannot be tampered with by government. They do not want to share what they earned through hard work with those who do not work.

SOME TRY TO DETER POVERTY BY IMPOSING CONSTRAINTS



Pierre Pettigrew, ministre
Ress. humaines Canada



Lorne Mitton,
maire de Moncton

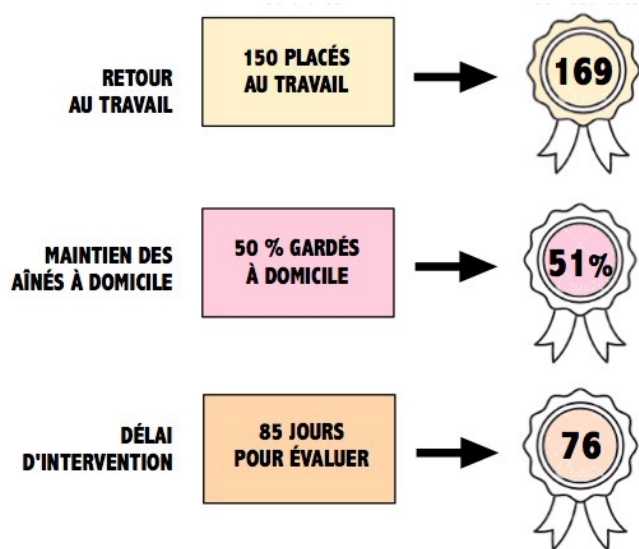
- The best way of helping the youth, says Peter Pettigrew, is to make unemployment benefits unavailable to them. If they stay longer at college or university, he says, they will then be happier at work.
- Lorne Mitton said that making begging illegal made the store owners happier. They are not disturbed any more and poverty is less and less visible.

A MATTER OF BUDGETARY CHOICES



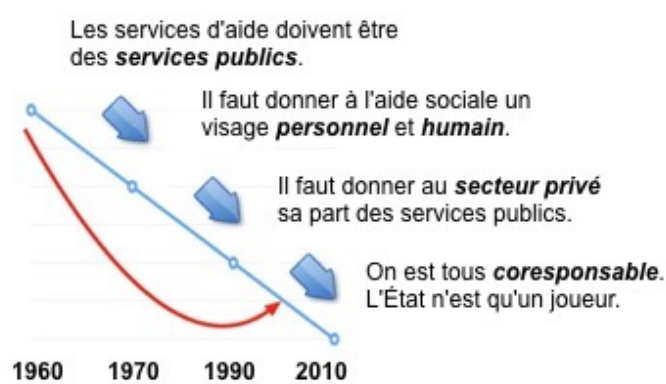
- Poor Lazarus only has the crumbs to eat.
- What were the leftovers for Lazarus in 2014?
- The federal budget was as follows:
 - 26% for the elderly, children and unemployed
 - 10% for health
 - 8% for defence
 - 4% for the poor

COMPLACENCY SYSTEMS MEASURING QUANTITY, NOT QUALITY



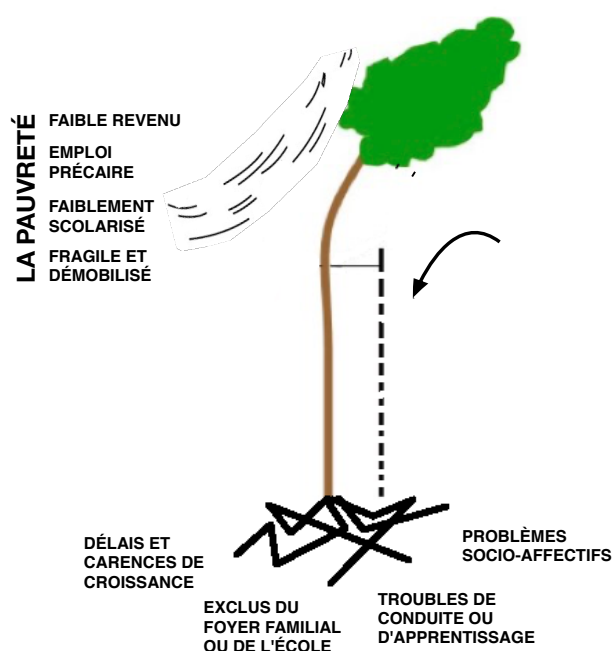
- Social Development has adopted the Performance Measurement System for its annual reports.
- It shows that the Department is doing well in terms of returning people to work, providing home care and waiting time for placement in a residential home.
- In all 3 cases, the results were above the target.

HOW THE PUBLIC SERVICES WERE TONED DOWN GRADUALLY



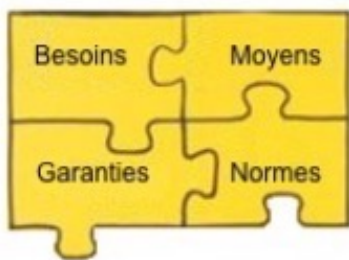
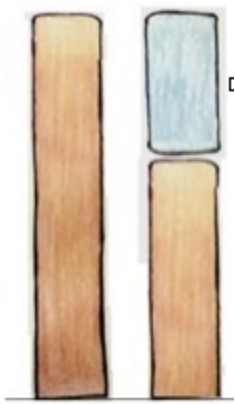
- In the 1960's, social assistance was considered a public service.
- Along with financial assistance, personal support services were provided.
- Then the government turned towards the private sector to take on some responsibility.
- People are now being told that social assistance is everyone's responsibility and the government is only one of the stakeholders.

FRAGILE TREES NEED STAKES TO SUPPORT WEAKENED STRUCTURES



- Poverty is pretty much like a frail tree needing stakes to keep it straight.
- The roots are in a shamble: many problems during childhood have resulted in a weak tree.
- Then different social problems blow on the trunk and branches to make it even weaker.
- Furthermore, the stakes that were there initially have been removed, leaving the tree to grow in a crooked way.

SUPPORTING THE POOR WHO SHOULD FOOT THE BILL?



- Social assistance used to be financed at 100% by the government (1/2 of the costs were borne by the federal).
- Nowadays, the government is financing partly the cost of social assistance.
- Who should make up the difference? The private sector? The community? The charities? Or every man for himself?
- The best scenario is a coherent and organized system based on the needs and means, guarantees and standards.

REDUCING THE OPPRESSION

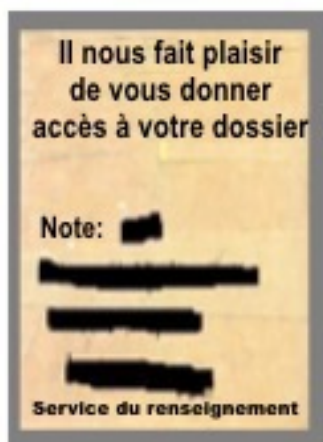
DISLOYALTY

A LACK OF LISTENING AND CARING



- The problem is that there is not enough listening and caring.
- Public servants do not seem to hear what people say.
- They prefer to do everything verbally, but do not keep their word and the citizens are always at a loss.
- Adding to that are the many investigations, the hard policies, the information silos and the presumption of guilt right from the start.
- At least 5 children were murdered by their parents in NB from 1994 to 2004 due to the problems in transferring information.

LET US FIRST REDUCE THE INDIGNITY, THEN THE POVERTY



- When people ask to see their personal file, many documents are blacked out. Government says that it has to 'protect its sources'.
- Material and financial deprivation is bad enough, but humiliation even more so.
- Many times, the public servants say: 'It's your word against mine' and they have the last word.

ELECTRONIC FILES DEHUMANIZE THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS

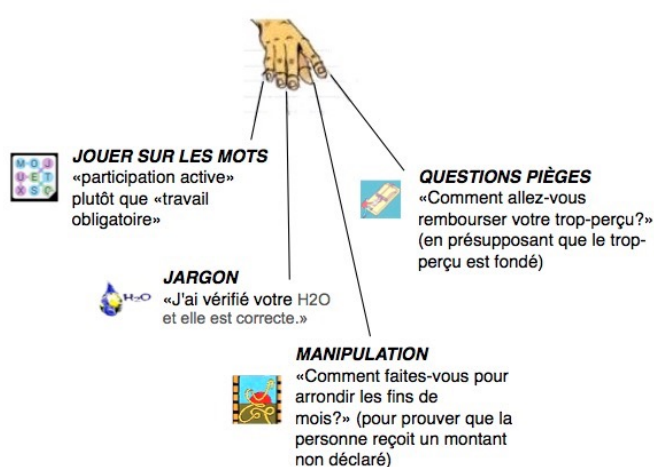
AVANT
Nom: _____
Situation familiale: _____
État du logement: _____
Problèmes de santé: _____

MAINTENANT
Nom: _____
Famille:
 isolée
vit avec d'autres
Logement:
 foyer d'accueil
chambre et pension
appartement
Santé:
peu d'appétit
trouble du sommeil
 diabète, etc.

- Initially, social assessments outlined the circumstances of a particular case.
- Nowadays, to save time and suit the computerized systems, forms are used.
- These forms, with yes and no answers, do not give an accurate picture of the individual cases.

MEANNESS AND SECRECY

A LACK OF INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY



- Playing on words, using a bureaucratic jargon or setting up traps are common practices when dealing with the poor.
- ‘Active participation’ is a fancy expression which means forcing people to work.
- Asking people how they can cope with so little money is a trap to find out if they get any income from other sources.

IN SOME CASES THE INVESTIGATORS HAVE MORE POWER THAN THE POLICE



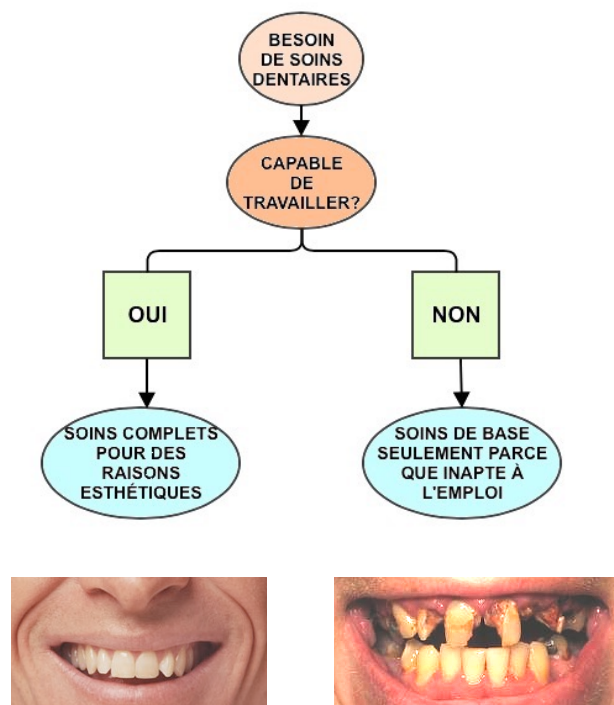
- In one year (2003-04), there were 3 600 investigations performed on social assistance recipients in NB.
- Of course, government has the right to investigate. It is in the law, but why all those secret investigations and the culture of silence?
- Investigations often end up in dramatic situations. They require a lot of work to reestablish the assistance.

WHY WOULD THE POOR BE SUBMITTED TO MORE CONSTRAINTS THAN THE PUBLIC?



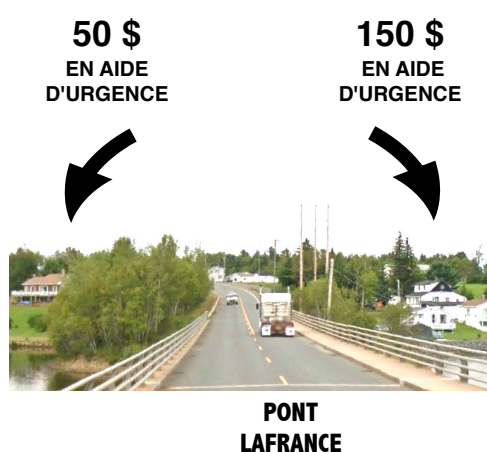
- Why are the social assistance recipients subjected to more constraints than the other citizens?
- There are at least 8 consent forms that they are required to sign before becoming eligible.
- Each one of those consents give the permission to government to intrude into the person's privacy.

IS DISCRIMINATION MORALLY DEFENDABLE?



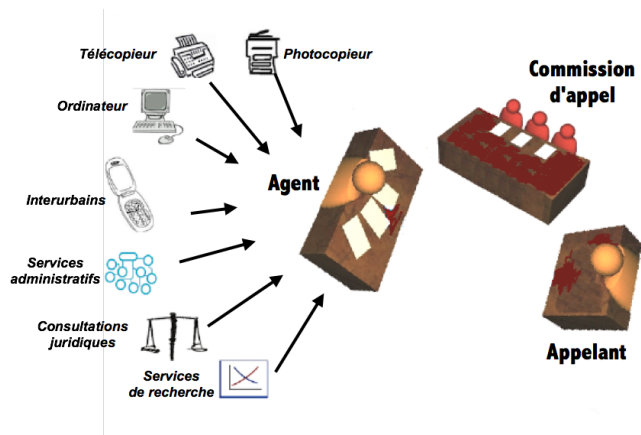
- There are 2 separate streams when dental care is involved.
- The first stream is a beautiful highway. It is designed to provide full dental care to those who will return to work.
- The other stream is a narrow and winding path reserved for those who will not return to work. They are only allowed the basic services.
- Government justifies this policy by saying that those who will return to work need to have nice teeth to get a job.

DOUBLE STANDARD POLICIES COMPARABLE CIRCUMSTANCES CALL FOR UNIFORMITY



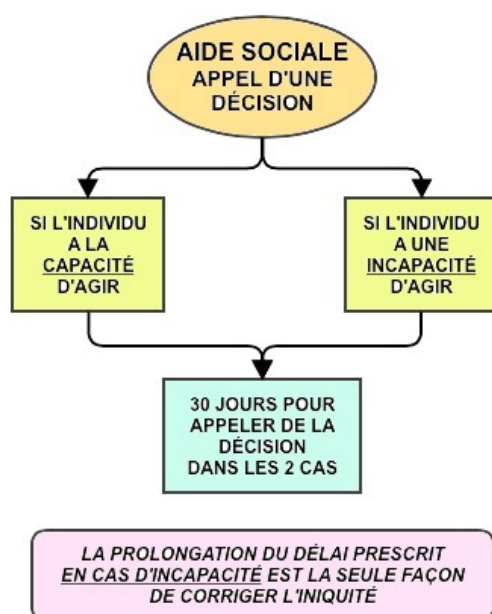
- A small community is divided by a bridge.
- During the ice storm of 2017, Social Development had 2 different policies, one for each side of the bridge.
- It gave a \$50 allowance to one side and \$150 to those on the other side.
- Since they were all exactly in the same situation, such discrimination was unjustified.

STRUCTURAL INJUSTICES FOR EXAMPLE, THE APPEAL SYSTEM



- The welfare Appeal system has been defined as a double standard system.
- While the government's representative has all kinds of tools with him at the hearing, the appellant is empty handed.
- This imbalance is due to a structural injustice and shows how due process is not a priority.

THE RULE OF FAIRNESS OK TO BREACH THE LAW WHEN NEEDED



- Another injustice is the provision in the Regulation which states that a person has 30 days to appeal a decision.
- The law does not make a distinction between those who are able and those who are unable to act within the prescribed period, the latter being temporarily disabled.
- Other provinces have rectified this injustice by prolonging the limitation period when people are disabled.

STICKING TO THE LETTER OF THE LAW A CASE OF A LACK OF JUDGEMENT



- A woman and her daughter live in separate apartments, but because they have the same electric meter, the Department penalizes them.
- The daughter is considered to be living with her mother and can't get assistance, while the mother's assistance is reduced by \$125.
- This is a clear example of a lack of judgement and sensitivity on the part of the public servants.

MORE CONSTRAINTS ON THE POOR TO MAKE THEM COMPLIANT



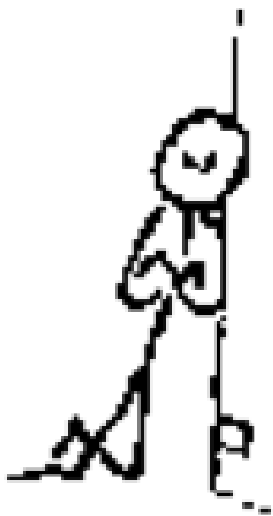
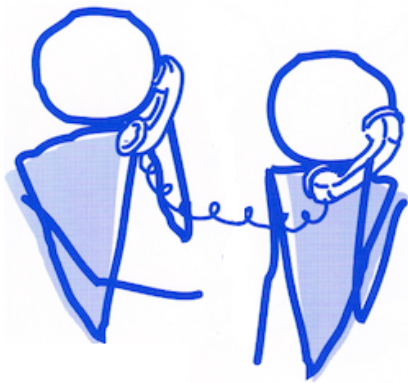
- Forcing people to come to the office to pick up their cheque is a way of exercising control over their lives.
- In some cases, the investigators park their cars in front of their home to see if they really live there.
- Forcing them to return the work boots and clothes they got when they returned to work, if they didn't succeed, is not only illegal (no mention of that in the law) but insulting and demeaning.

NOT KEEPING ONE'S WORD AND HIDING ONE'S IDENTITY



- Phone calls are terrible for assisted citizens. The public servants will always tell their clients that they were clear in their instructions.
- The problem often lies with the wall of anxiety which is like a firewall blocking the communication.
- Furthermore, many public servants hide behind the anonymity screen. Some letters are simply signed: 'Recovery Unit'.
- There is no way the citizens can get back to the writer and explain his situation.

PUTTING PEOPLE ON WAITING LISTS AND FORCING THEM TO USE PHONE BOOTHS



- Social Development does not want its clients to speak directly with its staff or meet with them face to face.
- It has set up phone booths in the waiting rooms of the Department. People have to use the phone to speak to their caseworkers on the other side of the wall.
- Some people are waiting for a subsidized apartment and have their names on waiting lists for a number of years before they get a call back.

REFERRING PEOPLE TO FOOD BANKS IS THE EQUIVALENT OF REFUSING ASSISTANCE



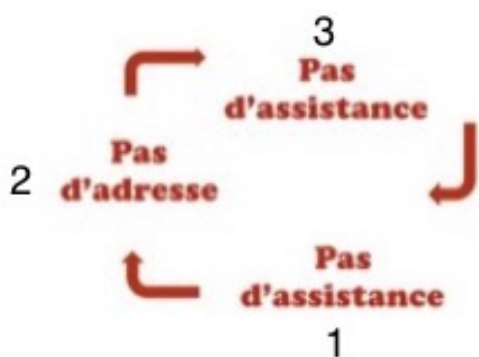
- Food banks are more a commodity for government than for the people in need.
- Instead of issuing emergency assistance for food, public servants simply refer people to food banks (subsidized by government).
- People complain that the quality of the food is often left to be desired. There is a legislation in NB protecting the donors, not the consumers.

HOW ORDINARY CITIZENS HAVE SUCCEEDED IN HAVING RULES CHANGED



- Some citizens have taken upon themselves to have some rules changed and they succeeded.
- Formerly, social assistance was reduced when people received food from someone. This policy was removed.
- People were forbidden to appeal overpayment decisions. This policy was overturned.
- An individual can now borrow someone's car and not be penalized. Another policy which was quietly dropped.

SOME INJUSTICES WERE CORRECTED



- Some caseworkers had decided that being without electricity was an impediment to getting assistance. This policy was against the law and removed.
- Social Development had devised a 'Catch-22' policy saying: 'No address, no assistance'. It was a trap. Without assistance, a person could not get an address, and without an address they could not get assistance. This ridiculous policy was removed. How were people supposed to get an apartment if they couldn't get assistance to pay for it?

SOME RULES HAVE BEEN RELAXED



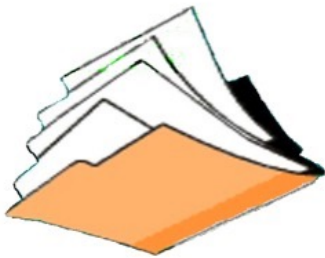
- Caseworkers used to tell people that electricity wasn't their problem, but those who couldn't afford to pay were not able to negotiate a deal with NB Power. This policy was changed and the Department can now pay security deposits and make other similar arrangements.
- Before, friendly separations ended up in both parties losing their assistance, but they are now considered valid by the Department.

SOME PRIVILEGES WERE CONVERTED INTO RIGHTS



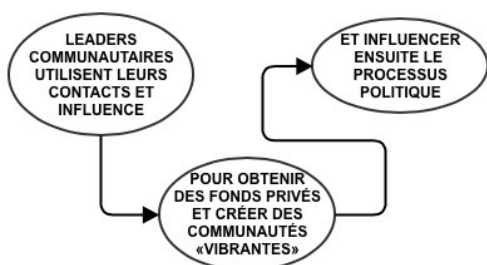
- People had to fight with their caseworkers to get decisions in writing, even if they were entitled to it by law. The Department used to say that it was too busy to write decisions. Meanwhile, there were errors and people were always considered to be at fault.
- The policy has changed and so has the one concerning the calculation of the social assistance allocated.
- People are now getting a detailed account of their deductions.

ASSISTED CITIZENS ENJOY A LITTLE MORE FREEDOM



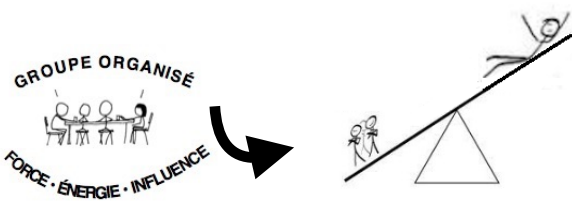
- People had tremendous difficulty in getting copies of their files. Social Development, in some cases, forced them to make their request in writing. This policy was removed.
- Before, the appellants did not have a copy of their file before the hearing. They now get a partial copy, 3 days ahead.
- This is not sufficient, but at least there was some progress.

A SMALL GROUP, WELL ORGANIZED, CAN GO A LONG WAY



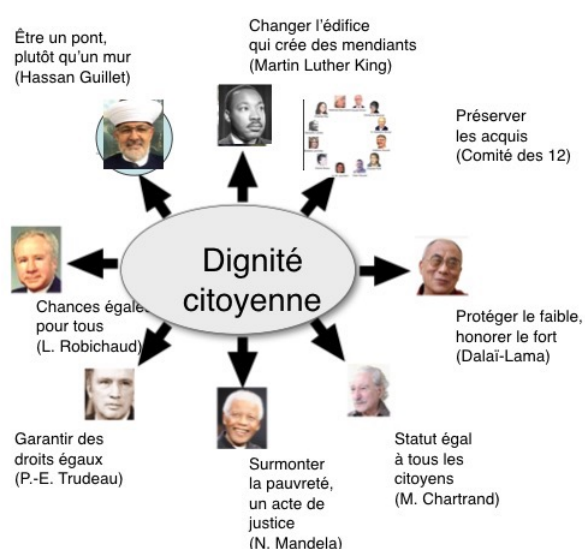
- Different interest groups compete with each other when they lobby the government.
- Some want less taxes, others say that the middle class is too neglected. They often get a sympathetic ear from government.
- A small organized group which advocates for the poor can also catch the government's attention.

SOCIETY IS MORE HUMANE WHEN GOLIATH FEARS DAVID



- A small group putting pressure on the government can exercise influence which may lead to change and progress.
- When they get organized and unite their energy, small groups can use their power to influence decisions concerning poverty, oppression and inequality.

THE GOOD NEWS: NEW VALUES POINT TOWARDS MORE DIGNITY



- Fortunately, there is a trend towards gaining more dignity for all citizens, regardless of their status.
- Equal rights, protecting the weak, preserving the acquired benefits, building bridges rather than walls, equal opportunities, those are all part of the current movement.

CLAIMING MORE JUSTICE

LOSING THE RIGHT TO ASSISTANCE BECAUSE OF EX-HUSBAND VISITING CHILD



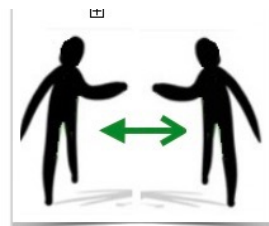
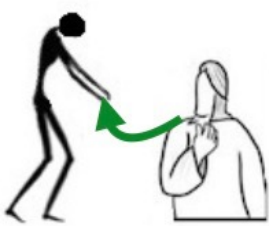
- The following is hard to believe.
- A mother who has separated has lost her assistance. Social Development has found out that the father visits the children.
- A situation like this requires a lot of work before assistance can be re-established and meanwhile, both the mother and the children are anxious.

HOW SHOULD WE HELP THIS MOTHER?



- What can we do to help this mother?
- Take her to a food bank?
- If so, she will get something to eat which will be some comfort, but it won't last long.
- The system will remain the same and on the long run, the problem has not been resolved.

PRACTICING CHARITY IS A GOOD DEED BUT THERE ARE OTHER MEANS AS WELL



- There is room for charity, but it is not a cure-all.
- The person who receives a donation usually feels indebted to the donor.
- Making the recipient feel good is better.
- The best is to treat people on an equal footing.

SOME CHANGES COULD IMPROVE THE SERVICE DELIVERY



- It is time for society to take a closer look as to how it deals with the poor.
- Services should be welcoming and human.
- The public servants should listen more, do away with the contraptions, do less investigations, make the rules more flexible and simplify the access.

ANYONE CAN PLAY A ROLE BY FIRST SHOWING INTEREST IN THE CAUSE



- Everyone can do something to fight poverty, the first thing being to get interested in the cause.
- Raising public awareness, fighting against oppression, supporting those who are in the field are all good means.
- To identify with the poor and join interest groups who advocate for them is also good.

WHILE ADVOCATING FOR A CAUSE, LET US ASK OURSELVES SOME QUESTIONS



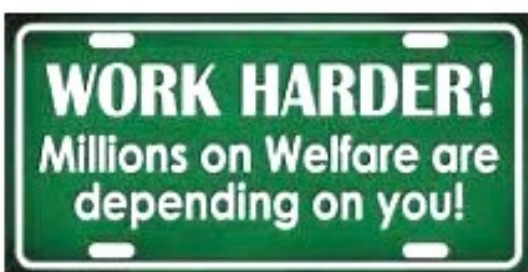
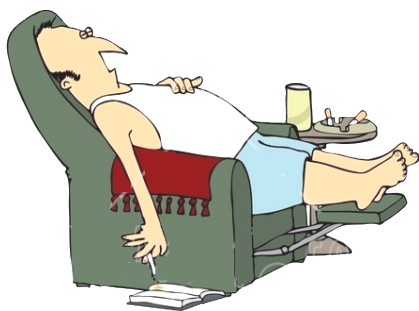
- Before doing anything else, one must ask themselves these questions:
 - Is whatever I am doing helping the cause of dignity?
 - Will it help to promote social justice?
 - Will it help society grow?

LET US FIRST TRY TO DEMOLISH THE WALL OF INDIFFERENCE



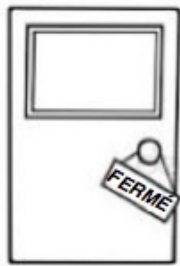
- Blindness and indifference with regards to poverty have the negative effect of making people insensitive, uncaring and unresponsive to human suffering.
- Advocates have to carry on public education and awareness on a permanent basis.

MYTHS AND PREJUDICES SHIELD AGAINST HUMAN SUFFERING

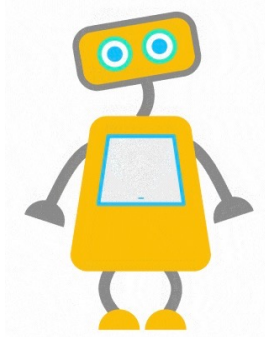


- A myth is a false belief while a prejudice is an opinion that is not based on reality. Both are harmful, and unfortunately, are widely spread.
- We must challenge any value judgements which discredit the poor.
- They are barriers in their lives, attack their reputation, their dignity, their pride and self esteem and therefore, are barriers in their lives.
- One of the most common prejudices is that the poor are poor because they want it that way.

SELF-HELP AND ROBOTS: A NEW THREAT

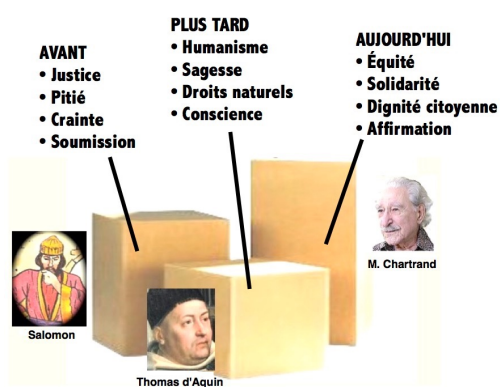


- Self-help is a polite way of closing the door to assistance and telling people to solve their problems on their own.



- According to the World Bank, between 1990 and 2007, 670,000 jobs were eliminated and the individuals were replaced by robots.

WITH TIME, A NEW MENTALITY EVOLVES



- In the ancient times, some of the values which prevailed were compassion, fear and meekness.
- Later on, other values emerged such as wisdom, human rights and natural justice.
- Today, we put forward fairness, equality, dignity and empowerment.

THE GOVERNMENT CAN DO BETTER



**ADOPTING MORE FLEXIBLE POLICIES
AND MAKING AN EXCEPTION TO THE RULE,
WHEN NEEDED, WOULD HELP**