

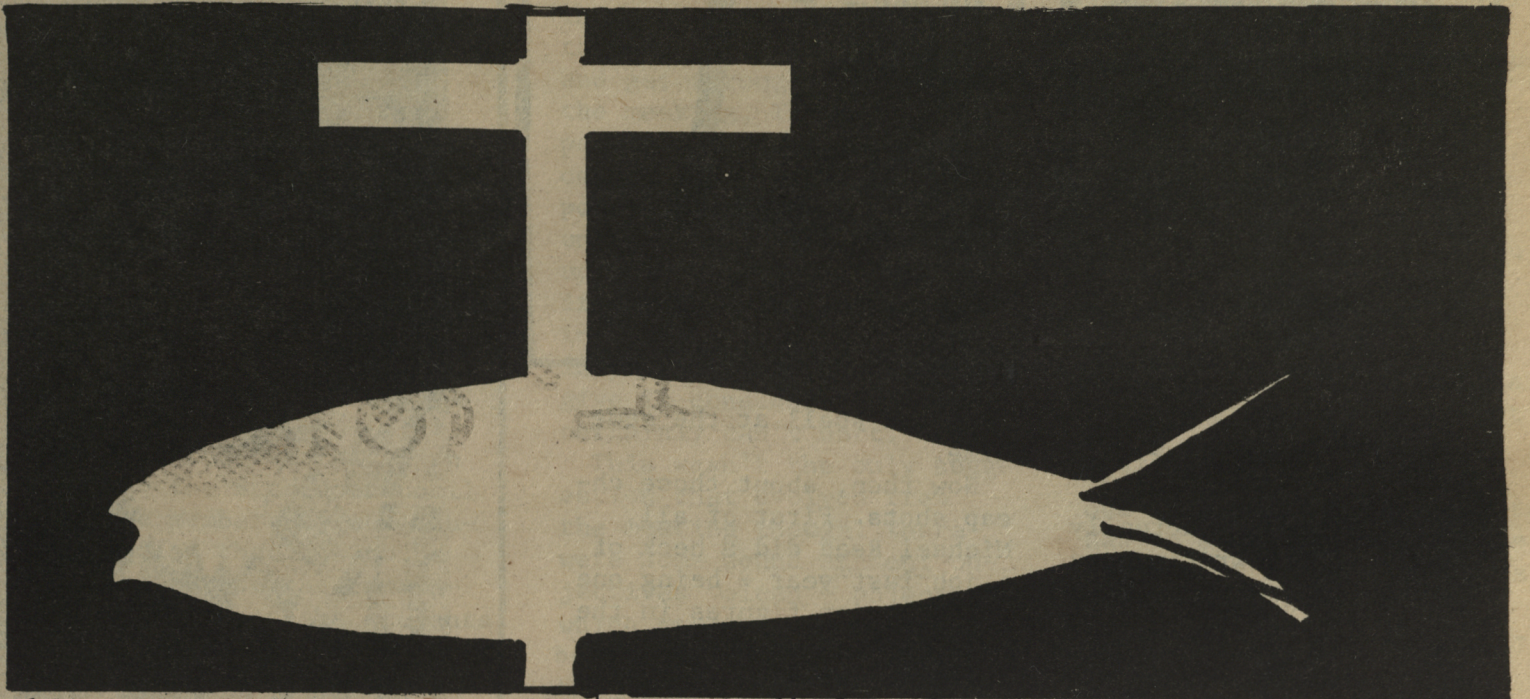
When you're down and troubled - Call the Fish

Information referral, support, and a sympathetic ear, for people on P.E.I. is as close as a telephone number. Many worthwhile services are available to people who may feel frustrated or lonely, but for one reason or another, are unaware that they exist. The Fish Movement of P.E.I. exists for this very reason. It is a volunteer service begun in England in 1961 and has since established many centers across the world, including Ch'town in 1972, and months later in Summerside.

The Fish has been a Christian symbol since the early days of the Christian Church. The Greek word for fish "ichthus" are the initials of the Greek words for "Jesus Christ God's Son Savior", and the Sign of the Fish Movement is built upon this affirmation of faith. The Fish Movement provides people with an opportunity to be of service to their community and to express their love and concern for their fellowman in a practical way. Too often now a days, we hear the comment that people don't take time to give each other the time of day, and that charity is old fashioned. Our modern means of living is geared to relatively high speeds, and although many of us say we'd like to help, unfortunately our road to heaven is paved with good intentions.

Most of the volunteer work is done on the telephone line. The existing hours that the service is in operation is between 2:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., seven days a week, with volunteers doing three hour shifts daily. The service operates firstly as a referral agent, and secondly as a sympathetic and guiding ear where possible. The office is equipped with two telephones, one for outgoing calls and one for incoming.

An extensive list of community services is organized in a file, at the fingertips of the volunteer, so that the proper referral is made. Someone is responsible for keeping this up to date and for bringing new changes to the attention of the volunteers. The location of the office is not disclosed. It is not unusual to have the same people calling in very frequently, and the danger of such people locating the office could certainly be



detrimental to the confidentiality of the service.

The Fish Movement has an executive of approximately twelve people, with two Fish Head. Members on the executive meet once a month from Sept. till June and may be asked to sit on a variety of committees, organized as the need arises. Members are people from the local community who have expressed a desire to help in this way, and who are responsible in drumming up support for the Movement.

Fish telephone volunteers are exposed to an extended screening process, and selected by qualified people before they go on the line. Application forms are received by writing to P.O. Box 1712 and after being processed and the person interviewed, he or she is notified about a training session. Training sessions once under way are held weekly, on a group basis and deal with topics such as, listening, referral, confidentiality, drugs, community services, and so on. After the training session has been completed the trainee is expected to work in the office with an experienced volunteer. This gives the new volunteer an opportunity to become familiar with the mechanics of the operation and to discuss the methods of handling calls. Following the accomplishment of the above tasks, the trainee is then assigned a shift of their own. Volunteers are reminded as often as possible that referral is the key operation of the Fish Movement, thus alleviating any unnecessary anxiety around being expected to be a top notch counsellor or psychiatrist.

Their identity remains anonymous simply because if

people were to disclose their affiliation with the service, it would destroy the confidentiality of the calls, and possibly inhibit the caller from using the service. Also releasing identities puts volunteers in the awkward position of receiving pestering calls at home.

The best volunteers we have, are people who possess a genuine desire to help. They are able to feel for another individual who finds himself or herself in an unfortunate situation. They are reasonably calm, responsible, and confident human beings who are able to get the message "I care" across. They aren't big business executives, nor the best counselors in the world but ordinary people who are interested and concerned about their neighbour.

Most of the volunteer work is done on the telephone line, but there are other areas that interested people may become involved in. These include transportation. Occasionally the elderly find themselves in a position where they are financially unable to pay for taxi services to visit the doctor or meet other appointments, and Fish volunteers have been very helpful in assisting in this way. More often it puts the caller in a position where they meet a new friend in the Fish Volunteer, and nine times out of ten this is the reason they called in the first place. Friendly visiting. An on-going list of volunteers is kept of those who have some time on their hands and who would like to put that time to use visiting the sick or the shut-in. This may include hospitals, nursing homes, or private homes, and has worked out to be a valuable and needed

service. Provide a meal. There is not too much demand for this service but occasionally the office receives a call from an individual who may have arrived in the city and who hasn't enough money that day for a decent meal. The Charlottetown Police Station have been very helpful in the delivery of this service. Housework for the sick. This is similar to the friendly visitor except that volunteers may be asked to do some work for the sick person and may come in on a regular basis to provide such a service. Again all the services mentioned, and others that haven't been, are done on a strictly volunteer basis, and at a time suitable to the volunteer and the caller.

The Fish Movement needs new volunteer people who have a genuine concern for others, and who want to help. It is especially in need of young people and volunteers from the male population. From the statistics collected over the past couple of years it is obvious that there is a need for such a service. Comments collected from the community at large, including the Dept. of Social Services, indicate that it is a worthwhile endeavour. Unfortunately it can not exist without you and as it stands the service is in great need of your support. This is your opportunity to contribute in a positive way, to assist in elevating some of the struggles that less fortunate people than you, are experiencing every day. Are you interested? For further information call the Fish number 894-3474 or contact Marion Morrison, Dept. of Student Services, Main Building.