

Neutrality Impossible For Poor - Says Burke

Alex Burke is a man with an idea. He wants to end the never-ending cycle of poverty and welfare prevalent among his friends in the Charlottetown slums. He feels that present welfare schemes are only stop-gap measures, and that only the poor can effectively improve their condition, as they are the real experts in the field.

He has begun to put his ideas into action. November 27, he gave this speech to a citizens' meeting held at Basilica Recreation Centre. Here, then, is Alex Burke's declaration of the poor's war on poverty:

"Fear is perhaps the greatest weapon that one man can use against another. Fear can be conveyed through intimidation. Intimidation can come through forms such as slashed tires, threatening phone calls, and physical attempts to deter one from his purpose. These are things which have happened to me in the past few weeks in the course of my attempts to get this poverty committee off the ground. Unfortunately, for those who have been the authors of the threats, it has not deterred me from my purpose; in fact, it has made me even stronger in my convictions. I came to the realization that what I am doing must be a decent course, otherwise there would be no reason to threaten me. Obviously, my research, so far, must be uncovering a lot of truths about this community which a number of people would not like to see made public. And yet, as far as I can see, I have only scratched the surface, and seemingly a lot more must lie below. Perhaps

this is what these people know and fear worst.

It is unfortunate, to my way of thinking, that most of the surveys and research have been done on the poor; people like you and I. However, one important thing has been left out. We must all recognize the fact that certain people in this community are capitalizing on our condition. We are being exploited for their personal gain, and in the process, we are being raped of our personal dignity and pride. If we were not poor and disadvantaged educationally, these people would be unable to rent us their slummy dwellings which are infested with rats, cockroaches, and bed-bugs. As long as we remain separated, these conditions will prevail and this will be the inheritance that we will pass on to our children.

It has been said that the poor are inarticulate — unable to communicate their desires to the rest of society. This is true in part, but it is also true that many of those whom we are trying to reach don't want to hear us anyway. The Senate Committee on poverty was a case in point. These people are afraid that we do possess the solutions, and that these solutions will upset the vaunted status quo. However, as long as we remain undisciplined and uncoordinated in our efforts, the people to whom we are appealing can very easily choose to ignore us and our present condition. In fact, they can even convince us that it is honourable to be poor because of the fact that someone has to be poor any-

how. This seems to be a totally ridiculous situation for any man to believe in, and yet we are duped into believing this kind of garbage. How can this be acceptable when we recognize the overwhelming fact that we live in one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The problem is that the wealth of this country is consolidated and controlled by a very selfish minority who is unwilling to divide more equally the riches of this country. We, as Canadians, all work to make this country rich, and consequently we are thereby entitled to share in that wealth. If the selfish minority are unwilling to share it, then we must forcibly take our rightful share. This reasoning is shared by all countries, including Canada, which signed the Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948.

Let us now move closer to home and address ourselves to our condition in P.E.I. One of the things to keep uppermost in our minds is the fact that depressing economic conditions force people to feel trapped and hopeless. We live in a sour atmosphere of poor health and bad housing which breeds defeat, alienation, and despair, and often, tragically, these attitudes are inherited by the next and succeeding generations. Further to this, I would like to point out the fact that poverty costs everyone something. Its most grievous cost are those felt directly by the poor themselves, but it also imposes very large costs on the rest of society. These include the cost of crime, delinquency, disease, and poor



ALEX BURKE - - - "LET THE POOR PROSPER"

education. They include the cost of low productivity and low output. Subsequent social unrest and tension which is associated with gross inequality is pacified and smothered by our welfare programs which are merely attempts to disguise the fact that we have failed to find more fundamental solutions to our problems. Now we—the real experts—must band together and bring solutions to these problems. We can no longer wish for change; we must will it by actively directing our energies toward rooting out the causes and intelligently applying applicable and viable solutions as we see them. Remember, welfare keeps people poor; it only breeds futility and apathy.

It is most important to keep in mind that no one will do it for us — the obligation rests with us alone. The time has come when we must dispose of our leaders and false prophets and begin to believe in a new kind of leadership. This is a leadership that cannot fail nor frustrate us. This leadership is in the hall to-

night, and will be in the streets and in the slums tomorrow. What is it? — Who is it? Is it the Messiah or a Martin Luther King? No! It is you — it is me! Together we cannot be defeated by bureaucracy, politicians, or clergy. We will set down our goals and we shall achieve them. Let us not forget that God helps those who help themselves. Keep in mind that the child that you rock in your arms tonight will grow up someday. And when he grows up, will he be able to stand up proudly in this community and say, nay, shout, "My parents helped me in the best way they knew how; they stood up for their convictions and made this community the kind of place where 'everyone' can stand tall and take their rightful place." This is the purpose to which I pledge myself, and to which I hope, with all my heart, that you too will pledge yourselves. My faith is captured in this simple saying: "Keep your fears to yourself and share your courage with others."

—Alec Burke

All's Fair In Love And War — and Renting Apartments

By Don Ross

It is all too common knowledge that this fair city suffers from that common disease associated with urbanization, known commonly as "insufficient housing". It is not uncommon to see advertisements in the local paper under "apartments wanted" outnumber those titled "apartments to let". If you doubt extremity of the problem, just call one local reigning landlord and ask him if he has a waiting list on his dog kennels. As you may have sensed it is these tyrants I wish to expound upon.

They own the typical 30-50 year old house converted into a 6-10 apartment building. I'm not talking about the newer modern "true" apartment building, which on the whole are well facilitated although you need a \$6,000 job and a string of references a mile long to get in one, not to mention you have to get your name in six months ahead, unless one of the tenants has a party and is asked to move on. No, it is that God-fearing, humanity loving gentleman owning the older, converted homes I wish to speak about.

One particular apartment building I'm acquainted with offers a typical example. The furnace finally blew up this summer, so a literal 2 x 4 gas

furnace was installed to keep the radiators warm in the 3 storey, 7 apartment building. There is one thermostat in the entire building located on the ground floor in the smallest apartment. Presently, this thermostat is held at 85 degrees to keep the rest of the apartments at 60 degrees. Did you say winter is coming? The building has a hot water heater that honestly fills one tub and is out of warm water for an hour, and then only if everyone avoids using the water for foolish things like washing dishes. How much is the rent you ask? Oh — a reasonable \$90 - \$125 a month, depending upon your extra-curricular activities.

Why don't these people complain you ask? Why don't they move out? I will attempt to answer the first question first. Most of these occupants wouldn't even dare to ask for better facilities little alone put forth their right and demand them, simply because they may be answered by such sympathetic expostulations as, "Well if you don't like it, all you have to do is give me a month's notice; I have people crying for apartments." It's true, they do have people crying for apartments, but does this mean that they should be able to exploit people in this manner? Why are they

allowed to exploit human beings, or being humbler, how can they knowingly do this to satisfy financial gains, when it comes to such a basic human requirement as "shelter". We realize these people have money invested, and deserve a dividend for their "risk", but this is just too much. We don't spite their dividend, but be fair.

To answer that second question — why not move? Where to? It's a vicious circle where you keep running into yourself. You might get an unfurnished, undecorated, half-house, on Elm Street with no central heating. Only \$75 a month, though!

I realize the average homeowner may think I have grossly overexaggerated, but I have not: as well as I realize, no action will come of this. I only hope that it may spark a sudden revolution among all department dwellers to stand up and . . . take it standing up. You are all middle classed, exploited idiots who tell yourself you are lucky because it could be worse. But don't weep, oh helpless ones, maybe, just maybe, this paper will ignite a small spark in the blackened souls of such hypocritical tyrants to make them feel one pound of sympathy — one ounce? — one gram?

May you "freeze" in hell!

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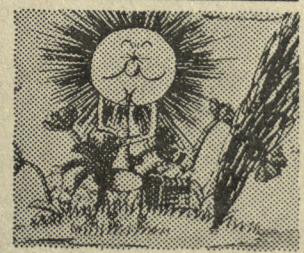
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