

Welfare Inquiry Results

By Gary Fisher

With the introduction of the provincial government's budget last Thursday citizens who were concerned with the plight of those receiving welfare assistance found that the government was planning to take action on some of the recommendations made by the welfare inquiry. On the third of March '81, a document

prepared by the Special Services Division was released. This paper listed the recommendations of the inquiry and reported on their current status. This paper demonstrates that the department of Health and Social Services has in fact reviewed the recommendations of the report and has taken action on some of the proposals presented to them. The

department should be commended for its performance in implementing some of the recommendations of the Commission's Report. However, after reading the brief submitted by the Social Service Branch of the Department of Health and Social Services to the commission of inquiry in May 80, I begin to wonder if the action taken by the government is a result of the recomen-

dations of the inquiry or if there would have been action taken anyway had there never been an inquiry. It appears that what the government was looking for was a philosophical direction and what it recieved was a mishmash of short term benefits. On page 13 of their brief they pose questions like: "Is there a right to financial assistance on the part of persons in need?" or "Does he (recipient) have other rights such as the right to confidentiality? to have information about assistance? to personal atonomy? to his own values and moral code? to his own behavior?"

The failure of the commission to address themselves to these questions of human rights cannot be excused. However, the government should answer these questions themselves and then go to the people. The failure of the government and of this commission to answer these basic questions of human rights leaves the recipients in a sorry state.

It is time that the government and the citizens of this province tell the poor that just because you are poor does not mean that you are any less a human, and as such you are entitled to the same rights as the rest of us. If we cannot abolish discrimination and inequality on the Island then what chance does the world have?

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