

“At Last! The Government’s War on Poverty Explained”: The Special Planning Secretariat, the Welfare State, and the Rhetoric of the Poverty in the 1960s

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Résumé de l'article

Le Secrétariat des plans spéciaux a été créé au Bureau du Conseil privé du gouvernement fédéral canadien en 1965 avec le mandat de coordonner et de promouvoir des initiatives de lutte contre la pauvreté. Vite rebaptisé le ministère de la « guerre contre la pauvreté », le Secrétariat était l'idée du directeur des politiques du premier ministre Lester Pearson, Tom Kent, qui espérait ainsi faire davantage connaître l'ambitieux programme social gouvernemental. Le Secrétariat a survécu à la démission de Kent puis il s'est fait plus discret dans ses initiatives de sensibilisation du public tant à la pauvreté qu'aux divers efforts du gouvernement pour la contrer. En partenariat avec des organismes bénévoles et d'autres organismes gouvernementaux, y compris l'Office national du film du Canada, le Secrétariat a mis au point de nouvelles façons de faire valoir les activités du gouvernement et de représenter la pauvreté. Sa vision du gouvernement, incarnée dans l'Index of Programs for Human Development, était exhaustive et reflétait une logique stratégique à l'égard de la bureaucratie fédérale qui allait dominer les années 1970; sa représentation de la pauvreté, surtout dans le film *The Things I Cannot Change*, était austère et elle marginalisait les pauvres socialement. Les activités du Secrétariat, qui ont été occultées parce qu'à la même époque étaient lancés les programmes sociaux de redistribution des richesses, ont laissé un héritage mitigé de mesures gouvernementales pour contrer la pauvreté.

“At Last! The Government’s War on Poverty Explained”: The Special Planning Secretariat, the Welfare State, and the Rhetoric of the Poverty in the 1960s

DAVID TOUGH*

Abstract

*The Special Planning Secretariat was established in the Privy Council Office of the Canadian federal government in 1965 with a mandate to coordinate and promote initiatives against poverty, and was quickly dubbed Canada’s “war on poverty” department. Originally the brainchild of Prime Minister Lester Pearson’s policy chief Tom Kent, who hoped it would make the government’s ambitious social policy agenda more legible, the Secretariat survived Kent’s resignation and took on a lower-profile role generating material to raise public awareness both of poverty and of government’s various efforts to alleviate it. Working in partnership with voluntary organizations and other government agencies including the National Film Board, the Secretariat pioneered new ways of presenting government activities and representing the poor. Its vision of government, reflected in the Index of Programs for Human Development, was comprehensive, reflecting a strategic approach to the federal bureaucracy that would dominate by the 1970s; its representation of poverty, especially in the film *The Things I Cannot Change*, was bleak and it isolated the poor from social relations. The Secretariat’s activities, which have been obscured by the memory of the redistributive social programmes introduced in the same era, left a mixed legacy for government action to redress poverty.*

Résumé

Le Secrétariat des plans spéciaux a été créé au Bureau du Conseil privé du gouvernement fédéral canadien en 1965 avec le mandat de coordonner et de promouvoir des initiatives de lutte contre la pauvreté. Vite rebaptisé

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le ministère de la « guerre contre la pauvreté », le Secrétariat était l'idée du directeur des politiques du premier ministre Lester Pearson, Tom Kent, qui espérait ainsi faire davantage connaître l'ambitieux programme social gouvernemental. Le Secrétariat a survécu à la démission de Kent puis il s'est fait plus discret dans ses initiatives de sensibilisation du public tant à la pauvreté qu'aux divers efforts du gouvernement pour la contrer. En partenariat avec des organismes bénévoles et d'autres organismes gouvernementaux, y compris l'Office national du film du Canada, le Secrétariat a mis au point de nouvelles façons de faire valoir les activités du gouvernement et de représenter la pauvreté. Sa vision du gouvernement, incarnée dans l'Index of Programs for Human Development, était exhaustive et reflétait une logique stratégique à l'égard de la bureaucratie fédérale qui allait dominer les années 1970; sa représentation de la pauvreté, surtout dans le film The Things I Cannot Change, était austère et elle marginalisait les pauvres socialement. Les activités du Secrétariat, qui ont été occultées parce qu'à la même époque étaient lancés les programmes sociaux de redistribution des richesses, ont laissé un héritage mitigé de mesures gouvernementales pour contrer la pauvreté.

A rather lively and blunt memorandum travelled from one office in the East Block of the Parliament buildings to another at the end of 1965, landing on the desk of Tom Kent. Kent was Prime Minister Lester Pearson's policy chief, and Director of the Special Planning Secretariat, the federal government's anti-poverty agency, and the memo was from Bob Phillips, the Secretariat's deputy director. It was a summary of how the Secretariat was doing in fulfilling its vast mandate, as outlined eight months earlier in the Pearson government's third Speech From the Throne, to coordinate the government's Work and Opportunity programme, which was quickly dubbed Canada's "war on poverty" — echoing the American declaration of "war on poverty" a year earlier — by enthusiastic journalists and eventually, the government itself. A few weeks before, the Secretariat had hosted a conference of officials in provincial government and in the non-profit sector who were working on poverty. The memo was a reflection on the conference, which had helped Kent and Phillips to see their efforts with fresh eyes, but had exposed them somewhat as dilet-

tantes. The tone of the memo was lighthearted and casual, almost humorous, but the anxiety underlying it was clear. (The embarrassment was compounded by the promotional material for the conference, prepared by the Canadian Association for Adult Education, which now read as mocking irony: "AT LAST!!," it said, "The Government's War on Poverty Explained.")¹ Having summarized the problems, Phillips suggested to Kent a way to save their mandate. "Perhaps I fell in with the wrong groups during the Conference," Phillips wrote, "but I found myself somewhat surprised to reach the conclusion that the most immediate new emphasis of the Secretariat should not be in co-ordination" of government activities, but "specifically with the poor."²

What did it mean that senior bureaucrats in the Privy Council Office should work with the poor? The question itself tells us something about the political status of poverty in the 1960s. The Secretariat's place in the Privy Council Office and its link with the Prime Minister through Kent's advisor role signal the central importance of concerns about poverty at the time. The Secretariat was responsible for overseeing a staggeringly full and varied set of initiatives. In the field of social policy, the government introduced, in a span of three years, the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Medicare, and the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), all major tax-supported programmes of public spending that redistributed income and alleviated poverty. Community organizing projects by the Company of Young Canadians (CYC), films by the National Film Board (NFB), and various publications by the Secretariat itself made poverty more visible to a concerned and fascinated public. The Secretariat managed it all, in theory at least, and did so from the centre: its perspective on the welfare state was comprehensive and systematic, and was embodied in the *Index of Programs for Human Development*, a comprehensive document of the whole welfare state intended to guide decisions about new programmes. For the Secretariat, these projects were all linked: poverty was not simply a brief but a lens through which it was possible, and indeed necessary, to think about government functions as an integrated whole working towards a single strategic end. Organizing the poor was, in an admittedly strange sense, a way of organizing power in the federal bureaucracy.

This article will examine the Special Planning Secretariat's activities in two key areas, the coordination of government activity and the production of representations of the poor. It will trace the production of the Secretariat's rhetoric of poverty, a Canadian analogue of what American historian Alice O'Connor calls "poverty knowledge:" a cultural understanding of poverty that isolated poverty from the social relations that produced it, and that set the stage for rhetorical attacks on the poor that undermined support for the welfare state in the decades that followed.³ Examining the Secretariat's role in coordinating government activity and producing material about the poor, this article draws on discrete historiographies of poverty in the 1960s; there is no equivalent in Canadian scholarship to O'Connor's work, which shows the emergence of a rhetoric of poverty that shapes the long-term struggle over redistribution.⁴ Given the Secretariat's broad mandate to coordinate and lend coherence to the full range of anti-poverty projects underway in the mid-1960s, its story is an ideal one to deepen our critical engagement with the full legacy of Pearson-era 'war on poverty.'

The Charisma of Poverty in the 1960s

Poverty became an important political touchstone in the early 1960s. Following a period in which a widespread belief held that poverty had been made history by general prosperity and redistributive social policies, this rediscovery of poverty saw journalists, social scientists, student activists, filmmakers, charities, and political parties all obsess over the problem, and both Lyndon Johnson and Lester Pearson declare a war on poverty in 1965. Although the roots of the rediscovery lie in the late 1950s when unemployment became a major public preoccupation for the first time since the 1930s, the particular form in which poverty became politically potent is largely traceable to one book: Michael Harrington's *The Other America*, (1962) which put forward the thesis that postwar affluence shielded most Americans from the knowledge that pockets of poverty persisted in ghettos, in rural areas, and in geographical areas "increasingly isolated

from contact with, or sight of, anybody else."⁵ A powerful corrective to the belief in universal affluence in postwar America, *The Other America* introduced a new rhetoric of poverty that underlined its invisibility, its status apart from industry, from the suburbs, from everything that defined America to Americans in the late 1950s. The poor, Harrington wrote, "have no voice; they have no face."⁶ Harrington's writing, by highlighting their invisibility, powerfully underscored the importance of representing the poor, and lent that representation an ethical and subversive resonance. Canadian journalists followed Harrington's cue and wrote about poverty in Canada and what people were or weren't doing about it. This sudden obsession with poverty arose from political economy but also from a social and cultural outlook.

The preoccupation with poverty was an examination or evaluation of postwar prosperity. A new governing ethos arising out of the catastrophic depression of the 1930s and the expansion of public spending in the 1940s, characterized by collaborative relations between industry and labour, and greater opportunities for education and home ownership, expanded the middle class. The rediscovery of poverty amidst plenty, which affected a permanent segment of the population seemingly immune to the effects of the expanding economy and the redistributive state, opened a new line of critique of an arrangement that had been widely lauded as the fulfillment of liberal democracy. In the media, and in *Maclean's* magazine in particular, welfare state policies were portrayed as heavy, rusting bureaucratic machines that had been created to address mass unemployment in the 1930s, and now needed to be rethought. At the same time, social scientists used new research to track, and then raise doubts about, the effectiveness of redistribution. Although support for a redistributive state was very strong, there was a growing perception that something was wrong, and that resources were not being used correctly. Given the extent to which its budget and operations were absorbed in welfare state programmes, the federal government had a lot at stake in that examination and a powerful incentive to play a role in guiding the lines of inquiry and the terms of debate. If it wanted to play a key role in that stock-tak-

ing, it had to position itself as a contributor, and the Special Planning Secretariat was its instrument.

Beyond its complicated implications for Canadian political economy, poverty was also tied up in equally vexed questions of alienation and authenticity that arose from the power of existentialism as a way of understanding the human condition in the wake of World War II. Poverty was linked to what Doug Rossinow, in his history of the American New Left, calls the “politics of authenticity.”⁷ For young people in the mid-1960s especially, working with the poor was a way to “feel real.”⁸ Poverty had immense charisma. The American activist Saul Alinsky, whose experience organizing poor people was distilled into a tough, almost cynical outlook that was on display in a set of two NFB films made in 1967 about his Canadian visit, perfectly captured the notion that poor people’s lives were authentic, and that working with the poor gave affluent intellectuals an electric charge of existential grit.⁹ That electric charge was dangerously ambivalent, however: on the one hand, the poor were alienated from the economic mainstream and had to be saved by being incorporated into the affluent society; on the other hand, the poor’s alienation made them more authentic, and exerted a magnetic pull on middle-class students, professionals, and government officials. This fetishizing of the existence and wisdom of the poor arose from their ambivalent position outside a social order about which many people had decidedly mixed feelings. The poor carried an ambivalent electric charge of authenticity, but accessing it could backfire if one’s motivations came across as inauthentic or ham-fisted — hence the Secretariat’s anxious attraction to working “with the poor.”

Tom Kent, the Pearson Government, and the Special Planning Secretariat

The idea of a federal government “war on poverty” originated with Tom Kent who proposed it to Pearson and other Liberal party leaders in early 1965, shortly after the Johnson administration announced its war. Kent had been pushing for the

government and party to agree on an overall strategic goal for governing, one that could be communicated clearly to the public. Settling on a unifying theme, Kent argued, "would be the decisive force in enabling the government to bring its achievements home to public opinion."¹⁰ The government had a crowded policy agenda, but very little of its work was resonating with the public. Kent was working on reforms to the Canada Pension Plan, introducing CAP, and coordinating the introduction of a national system of Medicare, all while serving as Pearson's political advisor. Re-packaging these initiatives as part of a unified plan or approach to governing would make them easier to understand and easier to invest with shared importance. All the better that they could be attached to poverty, which was such a powerful idea. "Older issues, however good," Kent said in a strategy paper in early 1965, "do not have the touch of imagination and drama needed for this purpose."¹¹ The charisma of poverty, that is, dictated the theme. Yet there was a legitimate legislative agenda behind the Canadian war on poverty; given the programmes Pearson's government was introducing, it was not disingenuous to claim that it was also focused on alleviating poverty. The programmes were there already, Kent said, but "to drive them home, a program of this nature is needed."¹² That was the purpose of the speech from the throne — written by Kent — that announced the formation of the Special Planning Secretariat.

Kent's push for a communicable overall theme for the Pearson government reflected his own growing exasperation with the Prime Minister's political style, which he thought was too reactive and scattershot. Kent believed Pearson got himself distracted from governing by short-term political squabbles and scandals. John Diefenbaker, the leader of the opposition, and a press that focused on their personal battles in Parliament, regularly derailed Pearson from his own government's achievements. Kent wanted a clearly articulated and closely adhered to plan, a sense of purpose that would make sense of the various policy activities, which tended to get overshadowed by day-to-day controversies. This concern went back a long way. After Pearson



Figure 1: The Government's War on Poverty Explained I: The Special Planning Secretariat grew out of the close but troubled relationship between Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson and his chief advisor, Tom Kent. Kent proposed that he be put in charge of an anti-poverty programme in early 1965, but stepped down less than a year later, leaving the Secretariat on uncertain ground for the remainder of its existence.

was defeated in the 1962 election, Kent had pleaded with the leader to tell the electorate “positively, definitely, simply, convincingly” what the party would do if it was returned to power.¹³ When the Liberals were in power after the 1963 election, Kent was frustrated by the disconnect between his roles as a policy guru and as the Prime Minister's “Mr. Fix It” to events initiated elsewhere.¹⁴ Exasperated by “tactical trivia”¹⁵ and Pearson's

vagueness on important policy questions, Kent tried to resign in 1964, but was convinced to stay, though their differences were never sorted out. Putting himself in charge of the government's "war on poverty" while still technically in Pearson's office was Kent's attempt to effect a partial break, to establish a sphere of autonomous activity in which he could apply his coherent vision to the workings of the state while continuing to assist Pearson in crisis management.

The election of 8 November 1965 was the first test of this approach, and it failed: the Liberals continued to campaign on Diefenbaker's terms, not on the strength of their policies and programmes. The Liberals were returned with another minority government, and Pearson and Kent decided that their relationship was over. Kent was made Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and Phillips, Kent's deputy, became head of the Special Planning Secretariat. The Secretariat continued to carry out its mandate to promote what Pearson called in a letter to the cabinet "the essential unity and force of the government's anti-poverty program,"¹⁶ but with less fanfare and less active sympathy from the Prime Minister. Its activities focused on two key areas, which will be examined in the next two sections: pioneering a strategic approach to governing the welfare state as a whole through the central agencies, and producing materials that raised awareness of poverty.

The Index of Programmes and the Welfare State as a Whole

The Special Planning Secretariat primarily did two things: it promoted a coordinated federal anti-poverty initiative, and it published material in various media to draw attention to poverty as a social issue. While it relied extensively on partnerships with other organizations in both of these spheres of activity, the first in particular was about collaboration and coordinating activities. An explicit commitment to coordination was crucial to the Secretariat's role, and was articulated repeatedly early in the Secretariat's life. Kent, in his remarks at the opening of a conference of federal and provincial officials in December 1965,

underscored the contrast between income supplementation programmes and the “opportunity approach to poverty problems” which was about “improving the performance of our economy as a whole,” and which required “a broad effort of coordination over a wide range of programmes and between federal and provincial governments.”¹⁷ The Secretariat’s early memos in particular reflect the importance of coordination and cooperation.

Staff believed that poverty problems were multi-faceted, and so solutions had to be multi-faceted, but couldn’t be loosely thrown together as they had been before the 1960s. W. A. Dyson, a Secretariat staffer, wrote in an early memo:

Action must flow from many sources. The resulting activities must, with greater and greater precision, be planned, initiated, organized and evaluated in a coordinated fashion. ... This will be difficult since myriad organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, at all levels will be involved — in a sense already are involved, but in a haphazard manner.¹⁸

The belief that existing anti-poverty was chaotic and piecemeal underscored the importance for the Secretariat of “new kinds of collaborative mechanisms for planning, research and action.”¹⁹ The Secretariat’s promotional material, like its internal memos, emphasized the need to coordinate existing efforts to increase their effectiveness. The Secretariat’s first annual report, *Fighting Poverty in 1966*, underscored the point that its role was “to help bring existing programs together, to end duplication, to help in seeing that gaps are filled, and promote the sharing of experiences.”²⁰ The Secretariat’s success, the report continued, “is measured not in its own programs, for in the administrative sense it has none, but in the increasing effectiveness of anti-poverty programs in every part of the country.”²¹ Cooperation necessitated a changed perspective, that is, a more synthetic and strategic view of government activity as a whole that enabled bureaucrats as well as the public to see how various kinds of activities by various actors intersected. In a memo to Pearson late in 1966, Phillips bemoaned the “tendency for committees

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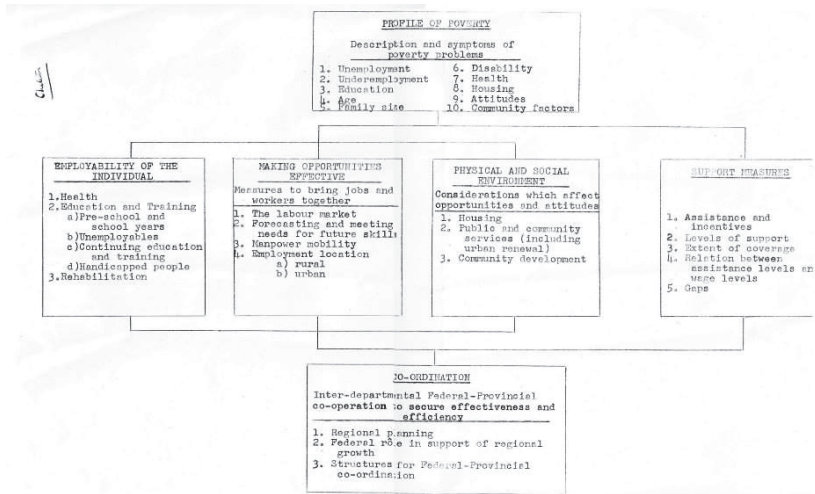


Figure 2: The Government's War on Poverty Explained II: A flow chart from 1965 showing the elements of poverty and their alleviation through effective coordination. Flow charts and organization charts were frequently used by the Special Planning Secretariat to represent complicated situations and processes. This one is explicit in linking the need to represent poverty to the need to coordinate activity, encapsulating the dual mandate of the Secretariat.

and Cabinet to consider each submission on its merit instead of in relationship to the limited resources of the federal government." This was so in "the anti-poverty field" but was also true of "the whole range of government." The Secretariat wanted to shift government from its ad hoc approach to a more systematic "examination of how resources should be used in pursuit of government objectives."²²

The Secretariat's commitment to seeing anti-poverty activity as a strategic whole extended beyond the government itself. Indeed the idea that good government was a partnership between the public and state was crucial to how the Secretariat operated. It worked through partnerships with voluntary sector groups such as the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) and the Canadian Welfare Council (CWC), and it relied on the CYC and the NFB to connect with the public. While these partnerships are not the focus here, the fact that the Sec-

retariat operated so comfortably at the boundaries of the state says a lot about its purpose and methods. The Secretariat and its voluntary sector allies saw the 'war on poverty' as a fundamentally collaborative effort, one that required more intensive coordination than it had hitherto seen. John Cornish, Executive Director of the CAAE, hoped that a conference in late 1965 that brought together federal officials and voluntary sector counterparts would help everyone understand "How ... all concerned operate in a concerted effort: government and voluntary, public and private."²³ Cornish hoped everyone in attendance would look at "the poverty problem as a whole, in its national, over-all shape. It is our belief that few of the voluntary groups have a comprehensive view of the problem they are tackling on a piecemeal basis, responding to particular facets which they perceive locally." The Secretariat would, Cornish hoped, help voluntary sector actors "view their projects in relation to an overall rationale of the 'War on Poverty.'"²⁴

This desire for voluntary sector actors to see their work as part of an overall 'war on poverty' was echoed in the Special Planning Secretariat's internal ambition to present the federal welfare state as a single whole. This perspective would help the government see where there was duplication or gaps in programming, and would also allow decisions to be made on a more strategic basis, on the basis of the government as a whole, not individual programmes. The idea of seeing the welfare state as a single whole was presented at its most literal to Pearson by Phillips in a February 1967 memo that suggested the Prime Minister authorize a comprehensive evaluation of federal government welfare state activities. What Phillips was suggesting was not a royal commission, which would be open to the public and the press, but an internal review by the federal civil service, overseen by the Special Planning Secretariat, of all its own programs and administrative practices relating to poverty. The time was right for an evaluation, Phillips argued, as "there is nothing on the immediate horizon with the scope of the Pension Plan, the Canada Assistance Plan or Medicare." The government should, he went on, "use this pause in major programming to undertake

the first comprehensive review of our social legislation together with our work and opportunity programme: in short, our war on poverty."²⁵ Beyond agreeing that a royal commission would be a terrible idea, Pearson did not respond.

The comprehensive review of welfare state programmes proposed by the Secretariat never happened, despite support from Gordon Robertson later in the year. But the idea of envisioning federal programmes as a single system was key to the work of the Secretariat, and was reflected in a number of its documents and activities. A 1967 memo from Phillips to Pearson on the question of a guaranteed income illustrates this predilection. Robertson had requested information on a guaranteed income in response to a *Maclean's* article by Peter C. Newman that had erroneously reported that Allan MacEachen, the Minister of Health and Welfare, was planning to propose one. Phillips wrote in the memo that the guaranteed income was not particularly radical, but was simply a sensible way to organize the welfare state. What had been radical, Phillips said, was the introduction of universal programmes a generation before. "The real revolution of the century is not the guaranteed annual income," he wrote, "but access to a certain standard of living which was made a right rather than a grace as a reaction to the degradation of the 1930's. The real revolution was the demise of the means test."²⁶ Since that revolution, Phillips wrote, no one has argued that poor people did not have a right to support; political differences were really about details: how much income was enough, and how was it to be provided? The guaranteed income was no different in this respect than the mix of programmes already in place, in that it provided income support to people who needed it; as with a guaranteed income, "the general economic level of the poor ... could readily be adjusted by manipulation of the dollar value of existing programs."²⁷ The general principle of a guaranteed income was the same as the general principle of the existing income support programmes viewed as a single whole. Rather than a radical idea, then, the guaranteed income was simply "a device for administrative tidiness" that would simplify, but not fundamentally alter, the existing welfare state.²⁸

The Secretariat's insistence on seeing the welfare state as a single, albeit complex entity is best reflected in the *Index of Programs for Human Development* it produced and worked on for almost its entire existence. Initially envisioned as a compendium of all government activity — federal and provincial — directed at alleviating poverty in any way, the *Index* evolved over many months into a more manageable project cataloguing the federal government's programmes only. The idea of a single publication listing all existing anti-poverty programmes in Canada had been discussed from the beginning, but nothing concrete happened under Kent's leadership. Work on the project started in earnest in early 1966 when D. B. Richmond, the Secretariat's Senior Economist, was put in charge of the *Index*'s initial planning. An early memo indicates that the Secretariat hoped the *Index* would allow its staff and other bureaucrats to see anti-poverty as a whole, to see where a given programme "fitted in the total picture."²⁹

A key consideration in representing the war on poverty as a whole was the method of organizing the information in the *Index* — a question that amounted to an understanding of the public's relationship to the welfare state. Richmond initially considered three methods of classification of programmes: by administering department, by type of service (income support or training, for example), and client type. Reflecting the ambitious culture of the early SPS, Richmond told Phillips that an "ideal arrangement ... would incorporate all three methods in a cross-classification system."³⁰ Richmond therefore proposed three sections, the second of which would be divided into five categories: income support, training, health, housing, and economic development.³¹ In the months that followed, Phillips sent letters to various departments asking for contributions to the *Index*, which he said was "designed primarily to serve as a source book where provincial officials, field officers of the federal government municipal officials, community organizations and other interested people can find, in one place, the information they need to direct their inquiries to the proper agency or agencies of the federal government."³² Texts started to come in in early fall, and were revised and translated through the late fall. The draft *Index of Anti-Poverty*

Programs was circulated in early 1967. An elaborate document, it used a four-colour system for its categories. The programmes were listed in each colour category in alphabetical order, then described in schematic detail, in one single page for each. These lists were followed by fold-out graphs showing who the clientele was for each service, again divided into the four-colour categories. The four-colour system and the fold-out graphs may have been abandoned owing to printing costs; they were dropped in later versions and, as there are no documents of discussions of those aspects of the draft, it is unclear why the design changed.

The name of the *Index of Anti-Poverty Programs*, however, clearly aroused concerns, and was changed. Robertson sent Pearson the draft on 16 February 1967 with an attached memo, which he also copied to Phillips, stating that changing the word "poverty" in the title of the *Index* to something else "would avoid the criticism that people are being called 'poor' who are not, and that the government is deliberately inflating the content of its 'poverty' program for political purposes."³³ There was also concern, shared by Pearson and Robertson, that beneficiaries of some programmes would balk at being included among the poor.³⁴ Accordingly, Phillips's own copy of the draft *Index of Anti-Poverty Programs* has the title crossed out, and "Index of Economic and Social Opportunity Programs" pencilled in. The final title, though, was *Index of Programs for Human Development*. A revised structure divided programmes into ten categories which were alphabetized, not colour-coded. There were more programmes in the final version as well as more categories than in the draft; there were no fold-out charts, the design was significantly muted, and the organization less ornate, but it remained a staggeringly ambitious presentation of the welfare state as a whole.

The Special Planning Secretariat and the Rhetoric of Poverty

The Secretariat's main activity besides the strategic re-thinking of the welfare state as a single administrative entity was publicizing an awareness of poverty, often in partnerships with producers of content such as community organizers and the National Film

Board. As with its other activities, the Secretariat was eager to underscore its role in furnishing capacity rather than producing its own content. As Phillips wrote in a March 1966 memo, “The Secretariat does not itself propose to carry out a major public relations campaign but it seeks to help those who do.”³⁵ The Secretariat’s rhetoric of poverty was not its own alone: not only was it produced in collaboration, but it reflected a pervasive view of poverty in the period. The kind of poverty that was rediscovered in the 1960s was explicitly uneconomic. The documents all aver that to be poor was not simply to have a low income: poverty was a particular condition of existence, political and cultural, a way of life. Poverty was, as Hartington’s book suggested, other: it was someone else, somewhere else. By not participating in the consumer society that was ‘normal’ in the 60s, the poor people became a model for another way of being: a more honest, more authentic, and less artificial way of life; the poor were people that faced life’s harshness with few illusions. They were good existentialists. A radio programme broadcast in late 1966 summed up a common attitude: “The psychologists and philosophers talk about alienation: the poor live it.”³⁶ As such the poor were granted a special status by the New Left, whose members aspired to style their lives after them.³⁷ The Secretariat, in echoing these popular truths about poverty, was following, not leading.

The New Left’s focus on poverty as a cultural condition dovetailed with the Secretariat’s own focus on poverty as a personal problem, rather than a social one. A memo from Dyson to other staff in 1965 noted critically that most previous poverty research “has been descriptive dealing with large population aggregates providing broad regional images of the poor. These have outlined their general location geographically and their general characteristics in gross terms (income, education, etc.). The methods used have been largely statistical.”³⁸ Dyson hoped that the Secretariat would do better, by researching and producing material about “styles of life, personal and organizational change, and inter-organizational patterns of work.”³⁹ The Secretariat believed, as did many other commentators, that “poverty is people — not national averages.”⁴⁰ While this had the advantage of being eas-

ier to communicate to the public, the representation of poverty as a style of life tended to abstract it from society as a whole.

This ethos was reflected in most of the Secretariat's publications. While the *Index of Program for Human Development* presented the operations of the federal anti-poverty programmes, other Secretariat publications presented poverty itself. These include first and foremost the booklet series *Meeting Poverty*, which became a bi-monthly magazine at the end of 1966, the pamphlet *This too is Canada*, published in 1967, and the most famous of all: *The Things I Cannot Change*, a collaboration between the National Film Board and the Secretariat. The discussion here will focus, for the sake of brevity, on two documents in particular: *Meeting Poverty* number 19, which was the report of a community organizing project in Kingston, and *The Things I Cannot Change* — both representative documents in their almost aesthetic fascination with the lives of the poor, and in their silence about the wider society that produces their poverty.

Meeting Poverty 19 was the report of a group of students from Queen's University who spent the summer of 1965 living and working with poor people in Kingston's north end. Working under the auspices of the Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA) rather than the Company of Young Canadians (CYC), the Kingston project students were not employed by the federal government or directed by the Special Planning Secretariat. Although Kent and Phillips visited the project, the publication of the final report as part of the *Meeting Poverty* series appears to have been the only direct collaboration between the Secretariat and the project. Most likely the report was written by the students and then published verbatim by the Secretariat, as was the case with the *Meeting Poverty* series generally. While it is written by the students involved in the project, its content is also part of the Secretariat's contribution to the government's war on poverty.

The report presents the history of the project and of the students' Alinskyesque attempts to organize poor residents into an effective political body. The report defines poverty as "chronic dependency," and notes enthusiastically the students' belief that "many of the problems associated with poverty can be tackled


and resolved by the poor themselves through cooperative political action.”⁴¹ The positive value of action and the negative value attached to dependency throughout the report paint an image of the poor as dangerously dependent on the welfare state. Indeed the only reference to income supplementation in the entire report focuses on the damage it does to independence. The report tells the story of one resident, Mr. T., who tells the students that welfare rates are too low, providing him with less income than he needs to survive. The report then continues: “His most significant criticism of welfare, however, centres around the way people on welfare are treated by the administrators: ‘When you go into her office she gives you a blast and when you leave you’re not sure whether to walk through the door or crawl through the crack.’”⁴² The language is hard to ignore: to the students, Mr. T.’s existential criticism of welfare is more significant, more valid, and important than his complaint about not having enough to live on. To the students, and to the Secretariat that published their report, the problem with welfare was that it created dependency, not that it provided too little money.⁴³

The poor of Kingston, in the eyes of the student organizers and the Secretariat, lacked independence and needed to take action. The good news, though, was that poor people possessed authenticity and grit — good qualities that other people might emulate. Unlike middle-class intellectuals locked in an iron cage of respectability, poor people were real, their experiences immediate, their responses honest. One student wrote that he saw “the life of the poor as more immediate, tangible, concrete,” and claimed that the poor “live, think and speak in concrete particulars.” To the author, this was a defense of poor people against the unfair prejudice of more affluent, educated, and refined people. But it was also an idealization of the poor and of their experience of the world. The poor, “usually say what they think rather than what they think they should say.” Unfettered by social norms, poor people came across to the non-poor as “crude, unmannerly, or vulgar.” But the student organizer knew better. “To me,” the report said, “they are honest.”⁴⁴ The ambivalent portrayal of the poor as both dangerously dependent on an impersonal wel-

fare state and exemplars of authenticity reflects wider current in 1960s anti-poverty, but it also points ahead to some of the anxieties about the welfare state and dependency that came to fruition in the 1980s.

A similar portrayal of poverty and the welfare state ran through the most prominent and controversial of the Secretariat's representations of poverty: the National Film Board's 1967 documentary film *The Things I Cannot Change*.⁴⁵ Directed by Tanya Ballantyne, a young National Film Board employee, *The Things I Cannot Change* was a harrowingly intimate portrayal of the Bailey family of Montréal and its struggles with poverty. Broadcast on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Festival programme on 3 May 1967, it was estimated to have reached millions of viewers — by far the largest audience for any product of the Pearson anti-poverty initiative. The film was criticized for exposing its subjects to ridicule and harassment, an accusation that has been refuted, but which reflects the power of *The Things I Cannot Change* as a document and a portrayal of poverty in Canada. Its power was a function of both the context of its viewing (the size and range of its audience) and its style.

Besides its very public screening and wide circulation, *The Things I Cannot Change* was also shown internally as part of the Secretariat's coordination activities. A private screening was held on 7 March 1967 for departmental representatives who gave conditional support for a programme called Challenge for Change to extend the film's gritty approach to other locales and people.⁴⁶ Challenge for Change was a quintessential Special Planning Secretariat project: "an unprecedented project in government coordination in the information field," as Robertson called it.⁴⁷ Senior civil servants meeting in Montebello on 14 and 15 March 1967 were given another screening as well as a look at the draft *Index of Anti-Poverty Programs* by the proud staff of the Secretariat.⁴⁸ Audience and critical reaction to the CBC broadcast were favourable. The personal approach was appreciated, with one reviewer pointing out, in an eerie echo of the Dyson memo cited above, that "Its triumph was to make us aware not so much of the realities of poverty, but of the realities of people in poverty."⁴⁹



discussion guide
THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE

16mm -- Black & White -- 50 minutes

Produced by the National Film Board of Canada for the Special Planning Secretariat of the Privy Council, 1967.

Synopsis:

The film lives through roughly three weeks in the life of the Bailey family. During that time the father tries to find work; a tenth child is born; and the father is involved in a street fight and difficulties with the police. The film represents a particularly intimate style of film-making, in which the film-maker live as closely with the subject as they possibly can, there are no dramatized or invented parts, and there is no staging or rehearsal. The film is an actuality report. All of the events happened, all are shown in the way they happened as nearly as is possible in film-making. Occasionally the film director's voice can be heard asking questions in order to throw more light on the family and its members, but other than that there is no departure from day to day reality except that brought about by the presence of the film crews.

What kind of film?

There is no narrative in the usual sense of the word, no real beginning and no ending. The family's existence has been much as it is portrayed before the film began, and there is no evidence to suggest that it is likely to change very much once the film is over. The purpose of discussion based on the film is fundamentally to explore why this is so, what causes people to live in this way, and what might be done about it, if anything can or should be done. The value of the discussion will not be in further elaboration of the particular plight of this family, but in the development of audience responses to the family's position. The film is about the situation of one family, but it is also about the nature of poverty in Canada, and poverty is a fact both for those who endure it and for those who permit it to exist.

Why do people live this way?

A major point for discussion turns eventually around the words, "things I cannot change", quoted by the father. Are these conditions that can not be changed? If change is possible, with whom does the responsibility for change rest -- with the father, the mother, or the society at large, meaning the members of the audience? What change in the life of the family would make a difference now? Is there hope for the mother and father? Is there hope for the children?

Figure 3: The Government's War on Poverty Explained III: The first page of a four-page study guide for *The Things I Cannot Change*, a film co-produced by the National Film Board and the Special Planning Secretariat. The film was broadcast nationally and distributed to schools and community groups across the country, with study guides intended to steer discussion.

An added bonus for the government that financed and distributed the film was that no one seemed to think government action was in any way responsible for the situation depicted in the film. "In neither public media nor letters was there criticism of government that the problems exist," Robertson informed Pearson, "but there was repeated commendation that the audience was told about the problems."⁵⁰

The Things I Cannot Change is a remarkably bleak film considering that it was produced by the federal government for broadcast on a publicly-funded television network, ostensibly as part of an overall strategy to draw attention to the government's generous welfare state programmes. Shot in black and white and edited in *cinéma vérité* style, it portrays the family's limited opportunities in a way that comes close to acceptance. The fact that the family's income is significantly supplemented by welfare is proffered, but in such a way that it amplifies the misery of that fact rather than the social relations of taxation and public spending that make it possible. The original NFB proposal for *The Things I Cannot Change* indicated that, by vividly portraying the "general despair" of its subjects, the film would "reveal much about the relationship of rich and poor in this society."⁵¹ In fact, it reveals little of that relation or of any relation, good or bad. By focusing relentlessly on poverty itself, the film obscures the broader society, not to mention the state. What it shows us of poverty is sundered, like the "small worlds of poverty" that Ian Adams would write about in his 1969 book, *The Poverty Wall*. Adams wrote that, while there were millions of poor people across the country, "poverty is in reality a small world, its boundaries defined by day-to-day confrontations with frustration, bitterness, and deprivation."⁵² Adams's rhetoric of poverty was built on Harrington's rhetoric of poverty as a world apart from — indeed segregated from — affluence, but it was more nightmarish in its alienation precisely because it denied the poor even the company of other poor people. Poverty, Adams wrote, "is really thousands, millions of small worlds clustered around and upon each other like the cells of festering tissue, each cell inhabited by one of the poor — a man, a woman, or a child."⁵³

The Things I Cannot Change, though its focus was on a family, not an individual, was almost as nightmarish, precisely because it showed the Baileys and their poverty in a social void.

Conclusion

The Special Planning Secretariat is an artefact of the rediscovery of poverty, and of the Pearson government's attempt to sheathe its legislative agenda in the charismatic power of poverty in the mid-1960s. Despite the near-fatal blow of losing its first director, Tom Kent, the Secretariat outgrew its origins. It promoted an approach to governing the welfare state as a single, strategic whole, and presenting the government's activities to the public as such. It also worked in partnership with the voluntary sector and the general public; through its partnership with the National Film Board and others, it also offered an image of poverty that was startling in its bluntness. The poor, for many young people in the 1960s, were uniquely appealing exceptions to the overall affluence of the period, and as such offered a powerful shot of authenticity and honesty that was generally lacking in consumer society. These fantasies were of dubious merit, and did little to help the poor secure adequate income support, but they were popular and a necessary part of the public engagement with poverty the Secretariat was tasked to engineer. From its precarious but powerful perch in the PCO, the Secretariat worked for more than two years to re-conceptualize government and to show the real world of poverty to a public eager for existential grit.

From the beginning, the Secretariat was unpopular with the rest of the civil service, which eyed its innovations with anxiety and disdain. J. E. G. Hardy, Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare, criticized the Secretariat's mandate in 1966 as an unnecessary duplication and muddying of government functions. The Secretariat, Hardy wrote to Pearson, should either be about coordination, in which case it belonged in the Privy Council Office, or about training, in which case it belonged in Citizenship and Immigration, claiming that "the present status of the Special Planning Secretariat is a hybrid between the two

and is really neither logical nor consistent."⁵⁴ The central innovation of the Secretariat, that it used poverty to think about the organization of the whole government in new ways, was clearly not universally appreciated or applauded. The Secretariat also aroused antipathy in other Privy Council Office staff that considered its work too political and amateurish, when the prevailing civil service self-image was as that of non-partisan and professional administrators. One Secretariat publication, probably a pamphlet on community development that was never published, was described by a PCO staffer as "badly written" and "having a freshman touch."⁵⁵ This antipathy towards the Secretariat eventually won out. Pearson announced in December 1967 that the Secretariat, the office responsible for promoting integration of operations, would be "integrating its operations more closely with the other elements in the Cabinet offices and dropping its separate name." It was a closure but also, in a sense, a supernova: now the Privy Council Office as a whole was described as "concerned largely with coordination, planning and priority setting in the federal administration," the erstwhile mandate of the Special Planning Secretariat.

Although the Secretariat's work was resented and received little support from within the bureaucracy at the time, its approach to governing would dominate by the 1970s and would arguably colour all political developments relating to poverty in the 1980s and 1990s. Politicization of the Privy Council Office and increasing central agency control over the federal bureaucracy are widely acknowledged as happening at the end of the 1960s, in the early years of Pierre Trudeau's leadership, not in the middle of the decade under Pearson; it is part of the Trudeau myth that he brought self-consciously rational decision-making to the work of government, for better or worse. At the time, however, scholars noted that the Trudeau reforms were "the product of a more gradual evolution" and "reflected changes in the PCO's role in the mid-1960s."⁵⁶ This continuity was forgotten some time after, most likely because of a habit of identifying the 1960s with the introduction of major programmes in response to a new awareness of poverty, and the 1970s with more self-conscious

governing of government and anxieties about spending commitments. The work of the Special Planning Secretariat, however, combined concerns about poverty with concerns about governing, and approached the development of new programmes with considerable self-consciousness. Anxieties about the welfare state's effectiveness and a growing reluctance to use the state's tax revenue to supplement people's incomes have been correctly linked to a shift towards neo-liberalism that started in the 1970s and culminated in the 1980s and 1990s.⁵⁷ The erosion of political support for retribution was indeed a later, longer change, but its logic is less removed from the concerns of the 1960s than it appears to be. While the government did introduce ambitious and expensive new programmes, the image of the welfare state produced by the Secretariat reflected worries about the unsustainable growth of bureaucracy and a culture of dependency generated by the welfare state. These shifts in attitude towards government and the welfare state began earlier than people think they did, and they happened not despite but through an unprecedented production of rhetoric about poverty as a social problem.⁵⁸

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Endnotes:

- 1 Invitation to Joint Planning Commission meeting on Canadian Association for Adult Education letterhead, 5 November 1965. Library and Archives Canada RG2-B2 Box 263 File: Work and Opportunity Plan – Special Planning Secretariat – General (W-2-1) #1 1965.
- 2 Memo from R. A. J. Phillips to Tom Kent, 16 December 1965, Library and Archives Canada RG2-B2 Box 263 File: Work and Opportunity Plan – Special Planning Secretariat – General (W-2-1) #1 1965.
- 3 Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001). The social and political context of poverty in the United States, where the term “culture of poverty” has taken on fiercely ideological and indeed racist resonances, is not empirically comparable to the Canadian situation. However, a negative stereotyping of the morality and character of the poor, which Jean Swanson has called “poor-bashing,” is clearly part of a shift in attitudes that is linked with regressive welfare policies. See Jean Swanson, *Poor-Bashing: The Politics of Exclusion* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001). In Canadian scholarship, however, the turn to neo-liberalism and resulting rising income inequality is most often tied to globalization and the Free Trade debates that followed the release of the report of the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada (the Macdonald Commission) in 1984, rather than debates about poverty and redistribution per se. See Stephen McBride, *Paradigm Shift: Globalization and the Canadian State* (Halifax, N.S.: Fernwood Publishing, 2005) and Keith Banting and John Myles, eds., *Inequality and the Fading of Redistributive Politics* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013).
- 4 The politics of the Pearson welfare state have been examined in detail by Penny Bryden and Rodney S. Haddow. Bryden traces the social policy innovations of the period through the internal politics and organization of the Liberal party, both in opposition and in power, and of its Kent-led left wing in particular. Haddow, who sets out to complicate the society-state binary that dominates welfare state scholarship, shows the diverse arguments and position taken by various actors from the mid-60s to the early 1970s. Neither is particularly interested in the Secretariat, though both note the centralization of power as an effect of social policy innovations in the period. See Penny Bryden, *Planners and Politicians: Liberal Politics and Social Policy, 1957-1968* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997) and Rodney S. Haddow, *Poverty Reform in Canada, 1958-1978: State and Class Influences on Policy-Making* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993). The National Film Board's production of documentaries about poverty has been examined

- by Zoe Druick in particular, in *Projecting Canada: Government Policy and Documentary Film at the National Film Board* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007) and in Thomas Waugh, Michael Brendan Baker and Ezra Winton, eds., *Challenge for Change: Documentary Film at the National Film Board of Canada* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010).
- 5 Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 12.
 - 6 *Ibid.*, 13.
 - 7 Rossinow underlines the importance of existentialism, which young Americans encountered through Christian service organizations in the 1950s, as an inspiration for New Left politics, and also links this existential outlook to a wider cultural ethos that pursued authenticity in the 1960s. See *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 5–8.
 - 8 The reference is to Tom Hayden's oft-cited remark that "students and poor people make each other feel real." In Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Hayden was the leader most associated with the organization's shift towards community organizing in 1963. Inspired by the success Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) had in organizing poor blacks in the rural south, Hayden and Carl Wittman wrote *An Interracial Movement of the Poor?*, a position paper on how SDS activists could apply SNCC's methods in northern urban settings, in what was called the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP). See Jennifer Frost, *An Interracial Movement of the Poor: Community Organizing and the New Left in the 1960s* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 37, and Wesley Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 137.
 - 9 Two films, *Encounter With Saul Alinsky – Part 1: CYC Toronto* and *Encounter With Saul Alinsky Part 2: Rama Indian Reserve*, directed by Peter Pearson for the National Film Board in 1967, both showed Alinsky debating strategy with Company of Young Canadians organizers. See also the biography by Sanford D. Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, his Life and Legacy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).
 - 10 Memo from Kent to Pearson, 8 January 1965, Tom Kent papers, Queen's University Archives 1300 Box 4 (Correspondence 1964–1965) File January 1965, 1. In his memoir, *A Public Purpose* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), Kent denied that the War on Poverty was conceived of as part of an electoral strategy, and said that his motivation was in fact to postpone an election (p. 354). The evidence seems to suggest that either he pitched an anti-electoral strategy as an electoral strategy or his reasoning was different at the time.

- 11 Memo from Kent to Pearson, 26 January 1965, "Canada Opportunity Plan – A Proposal," Tom Kent papers, Queen's University Archives 1300 Box 4 (Correspondence 1964-1965) File January 1965, 1.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Kent cited in J. L. Granatstein, *Canada 1957–1967: The Years of Uncertainty and Innovation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 97.
- 14 Doern, "Development of Policy Organizations," 50.
- 15 Kent cited in Denis Smith, *Gentle Patriot: A Political Biography of Walter Gordon* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1973), 387.
- 16 Letter from Pearson to ministers, 2 May 1966, Library and Archives Canada, MG 26 N4 Vol. 148 File 353, 1.
- 17 Poverty and Opportunity Conference – Opening Remarks (7 December 1965), Tom Kent Fonds, Queen's University, Collection 5123 (1994 accrual) Box 4 File 12 (Government Briefs, Reports, Drafts, Etc. 1965), 6.
- 18 Memo to Tom Kent from W. A. Dyson 30 July 1965, 1.
- 19 Ibid., 2.
- 20 *Fighting Poverty in 1966*, 2.
- 21 Ibid., 3.
- 22 Memo from Phillips to Robertson, 17 October 1966, "An Evening with the SPS," Library and Archives Canada RG2-B2 Box 263 File: Work and Opportunity Plan, Special Planning Secretariat – (W-2-1) #3 Sept 66-Dec 1966, 1.
- 23 Letter from John Cornish to Phillips, 27 October 1965, Library and Archives Canada, RG2-B2 Box 263 File: Work and Opportunity Plan – Special Planning Secretariat – General (W-2-1) #1 1965, 1.
- 24 Ibid., 1.
- 25 Memo from Phillips to Pearson, 2 Feb 1967, Library and Archives Canada, MG 26 N4 Vol. 148 File 353.
- 26 Memo from Phillips to Pearson re Guaranteed Annual Income, 19 May 1967, Library and Archives Canada, RG 26 Vol. 83 file No. 1-24-61 part 2, 1.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Memo from A. J. E. Smith to Phillips, 5 May 1966, Library and Archives Canada RG2-B-2 Box 264 File W-2-1 (g) 1966 Work and Opportunity Plan – Special Planning Secretariat – Index of Programs.
- 30 Memo from D. B. Richmond to Phillips, 22 March 1966, Library and Archives Canada, Index RG2-B-2 Box 264 File W-2-1 (g) 1966 Work and Opportunity Plan – Special Planning Secretariat – Index of Programs.
- 31 Memo from D. B. Richmond to Phillips 22 March 1966, Library and Archives Canada, RG2-B-2 Box 264 File W-2-1 (g) 1966 Work and Opportunity Plan – Special Planning Secretariat – Index of Programs.

- 32 Letter from Phillips to various officials, May and June 1966 File W-2-1 (g) 1966 Work and Opportunity Plan – Special Planning Secretariat – Index of Programs.
- 33 Memo from Robertson to Phillips, 16 February 1967, forwarding his memo to Pearson Library and Archives Canada RG2-B-2 Box 264 File W-2-1 (g) 1967 Work and Opportunity Plan – Special Planning Secretariat – Index of Programs.
- 34 Memo from Robertson to Pearson, 16 February 1967, Library and Archives Canada, RG2-B-2 Box 264 File W-2-1 (g) 1967 Work and Opportunity Plan – Special Planning Secretariat – Index of Programs. Robertson wrote that “I am suggesting to the Special Planning Secretariat that they should widen the terminology in their title, and in parts of the text, so as to cover a broader area than ‘anti-poverty’ in the terminology. While in a general sense all programmes are either to alleviate poverty or to see that it does not afflict people, it would, I think, unnecessarily provide a point of criticism to be suggesting that, for instance, the Canada Pension Plan, loans for students, small business loans, and other things of that kind, are directly related to ‘poverty.’” Pearson commented in pencil: “This is important – because of the nature of the programs referred to.”
- 35 Phillips memo, 10 March 66, Library and Archives Canada, RG85 Volume 1898 File 1003-32, 8.
- 36 Transcript of CBC Broadcasts by David Critchley on “The Real Meaning of Poverty” broadcast 27 June 1966, Library and Archives Canada, MG 26 N4 Vol. 148 File 353, 2.
- 37 Cathy Wilkerson, who was an ERAP organizer in Columbus, Ohio, explained the generation gap between herself and her parents in her memoir, *Flying Close to the Sun: My Life and Times as a Weatherman* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007), noting that “It was one thing to help people who were poor, but quite another to identify with them or see them as mentors” (p. 64). It was never completely clear if poor people wanted to be identified with or emulated by young middle class intellectuals.
- 38 Memo from Dyson to all SPS staff, 29 July 1965, Library and Archives Canada, RG2-B2 Box 263 File: Work and Opportunity Plan – Special Planning Secretariat – General (W-2-1) #1 1965, 1.
- 39 Memo from Dyson to all SPS staff 29 July 1965, Library and Archives Canada RG2-B2 Box 263 File: Work and Opportunity Plan – Special Planning Secretariat – General (W-2-1) #1 1965, 4.
- 40 Consultation Looking Toward a National Conference on Urban Community Development (draft), 11 October 1966, Library and Archives Canada, MG 28 I10 Volume 213, File 213-17 Special Planning Secretariat of Privy Council; Urban Community Development 1965–1966, 19.
- 41 *Kingston Summer Project 1965*, 1.

- 42 Ibid., 22.
- 43 This changed later in the 1960s, when the New Left shed its existential baggage and adopted a more class-conscious perspective. In the book *The Real Poverty Report*, for example, Adams et al. write that "Although it may astound many members of the affluent class, the simple truth is that people are poor because they don't have enough money" (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1971), 8. As simple as it is, no one in the New Left appears to have believed it before 1967.
- 44 *Kingston Summer Project 1965*, 34.
- 45 The film has been discussed extensively by scholars, primarily in terms of its ethics in representing and broadcasting the family, but also, by Zoe Druick's, in the context of the 'war on poverty' as a whole. Druick, however, reads *Things* alongside the major redistributive social programmes of the period, not Meeting Poverty or the Secretariat's other publications. The difference in impression this creates is significant. See Zoe Druick, *Projecting Canada*, 139–44; see also Druick "Meeting at the Poverty Line," and Brenda Longfellow, "The Things I Cannot Change: A Revisionary Reading," both in Waugh et al., eds., *Challenge for Change*.
- 46 Letter from Phillips to Pearson re Challenge for Change, 10 May 1967, Library and Archives Canada RG 26 Vol. 83 file No. 1-24-61 part 2, 1. Zoe Druick writes of an earlier preview for the Department of Health and Welfare in late 1966, in *Projecting Canada: Government Policy and Documentary Film at the National Film Board* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 143.
- 47 Memo from Robertson to Pearson, 5 June 1967, Library and Archives Canada, MG 26 N4 Vol. 148 File 353.1, 2.
- 48 RG2-B-2 Box 264 File W-2-1 (g) 1967 Work and Opportunity Plan – Special Planning Secretariat – Index of Programs.
- 49 Memo from Robertson to Pearson, 5 June 1967 Library and Archives Canada, MG 26 N4 Vol. 148 File 353.1, 1.
- 50 Ibid., 2.
- 51 Cited in Druick, *Projecting Canada*, 143.
- 52 Ian Adams, *The Poverty Wall* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), 15.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Memo from Hardy to Robertson, 1 March 1966, Library and Archives Canada, RG2-B2 Box 263 File: Work and Opportunity Plan, Special Planning Secretariat (W-2-1) #2 – Jan/Mar 1966, 2.
- 55 Memo from H. D. to Pearson, 4 October 1966, Library and Archives Canada, MG 26 N4 Vol. 148 File 353, 1.
- 56 G. Bruce Doern, "The Development of Policy Organizations in the Executive Arena," in *The Structures of Policy-Making in Canada*, eds. G. Bruce Doern and Peter Aucoin (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971), 39, 49.

- 57 The scholarly literature on neo-liberalism and the decline of redistributive politics is vast, particularly in political science. For an introduction to the issue, see Banting and Myles, eds., *Inequality and the Fading of Redistributive Politics* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013).
- 58 Again, this claim was familiar to scholars at the time. Doern wrote that the Trudeau era changes reflected a “concern that was beginning to emerge in the late 1960s regarding the general effectiveness of the welfare state apparatus that had been the main preoccupation of government and politics in most western societies since the 1930s,” “The Development of Policy Organizations,” 63.