



## KEY POINTS OF AN ANTI- POVERTY STRATEGY

### **The Principles**

It is unlikely that an anti-poverty strategy could succeed unless it were given total priority by government and people. The approach to date has been a mixture of ad hoc measures and a vague hope that 'a rising tide will lift all boats'. A serious anti-poverty strategy would mean that:

- A range of specific activities would be chosen to combat poverty;

- All other activities undertaken by government should be evaluated in terms of their likelihood of increasing or decreasing poverty;

- Where choices have to be made because of limited resources, actions which produce long term and lasting results should be preferred to those with only short-term and limited results;

- Those activities assessed as having the greatest impact on poverty should be excluded from financial cutbacks. Cuts should never be 'across the board'.

### **The Strategy**

The only strategy likely to eliminate poverty in the long term is one that would enhance the potential of individuals and social groups who are currently socially excluded. This particularly refers to the unskilled socio-economic group, from whose ranks most of the long-term unemployed are drawn, and whose younger members are most at risk of becoming long-term unemployed.

### **The Policy Priorities**

The normal age at which education and training ends should be regarded as at least 18, and all government decisions bearing on education, training and social welfare should reflect this; specific steps should be taken to encourage children from lower socio-economic groups to continue education and training until at least 18.

Adult education for disadvantaged

groups must be regarded as a priority area in the allocation of funding.

### **Institutional Changes Needed**

A top-level Interdepartmental Committee would need to be set in place to oversee the implementation of an Anti-Poverty Strategy.

The Departments of Finance and Education, in particular, must adopt as a priority the funding of education and training of disadvantaged groups.

In every government department an 'ombudsman', reporting to the Interdepartmental Committee, should be appointed to review the impact of decisions, actions, and plans of that department on poverty and disadvantage.

Every local authority and public agency should also be required to "poverty proof" their actions and programmes.

The process of consulting should include a nationwide door-to-door survey (on the lines of that described in this Newsletter) in disadvantaged areas.

### **GRASSROOTS**

The GRASSROOTS group is running an all-day Seminar for members of religious orders living in disadvantaged areas on 27th April, 1996. Further details in next issue of Working Notes or from Bill Toner, SJ at 01-874-0814.

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