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Canadian Mennonites serve in ghettos

On Sunday evening, March 20th, 19-year old Larry was working on his car in front of his home in Watts, Los Angeles, when he was shot eleven times. Three bullets entered his head. Amazingly, Larry lived.

Friday, the first day Larry regained consciousness, Fred Stoesz, the Los Angeles Men's Director of World Impact, met this teenager for the first time in Martin Luther King Hospital. Larry was in critical condition. Fred told Larry that many Christians were praying for him, and explained that Jesus had a brand new life to give Larry.

When Fred extended Christ's invitation to be his child, Larry nodded, "yes." Fred continues to visit Larry frequently, talking with him about Christ and his new life. Larry said, "When I get out of here (the hospital), my life's going to be different!"

Fred is one of seven Canadians from Mennonite Brethren churches working in the inner city with World Impact, Inc. With ministries across the United States, World Impact constantly needs new staff to touch the thousands of people who are desperately hurting, lonely and in need in the inner city.

Working with World Impact are: Glenda Hooge, Chilliwack, B.C.; Randy Plett, Burnaby, B.C.; Kim Seebach, Moose Jaw, Sask.; Fred Stoesz, Winkler, Man.; and Mary Thiessen, Coaldale, Alta. (all in Los Angeles, California); Jerry

Peters, St. Catharines, Ont. (in Wichita, Kansas); and Gail Giesbrecht, Vancouver, B.C. (in Portland, Oregon).

These seven Canadians have committed themselves to making disciples for Christ in urban America. They do this by teaching children's and teen Bible clubs and adult Bible studies. They conduct sports, recreation, teen choirs, films, fellowship groups, and discipleship. They distribute emergency food and clothing.

Often they counsel in situations far removed from their secure pasts. They counsel girls who have had abortions; teach 13- and 14-year old unwed mothers —about Jesus and about caring for their babies; listen, care and counsel after a rape; deal with families where each of the five children has a different father; build up young men who've been frequently arrested and jailed; tutor illiterate high school graduates; and help families who are victims of a molotov cocktail to find homes, blankets and clothes. They love children who are afraid because kids are killed in the school halls in spite of the constant police guards. These Canadian Mennonites, who treasure their own Christian homes, are working to build strong, unified Christian families in the inner city.

What makes a Mennonite from rural Canada come to the smog, crime and violence of the inner city?

Mary Thiessen, from Coaldale, first came to Los Angeles on an Urban En-

counter. She didn't want to come on this inner city exposure course, fearing she would be held responsible to do something about any urgent needs she saw. But a professor encouraged her to come. Sure that it was too late to be accepted, Mary agreed to come if there was room. There was . . . one opening!

In Los Angeles, Mary fought that complete submission to God which would demand total openness to his direction. One afternoon, at a drug rehabilitation center, Mary heard nothing of the lecture. She finally said, "Okay, God, I'll do anything you want . . . even if it's opening a girls' home in Los Angeles."

Back at Tabor College three weeks later, Keith Phillips, president of World Impact, asked Mary if she would come to L.A. and begin a girl's home.

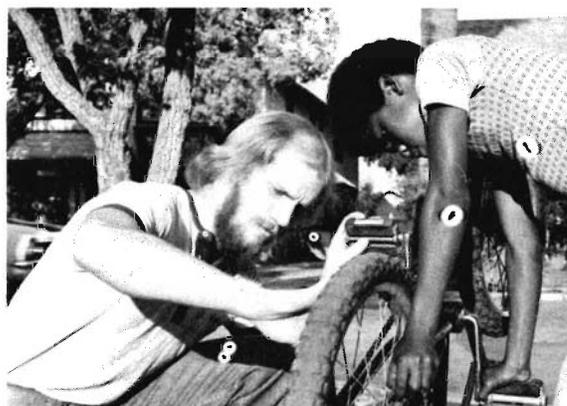
When Mary arrived at the newly acquired girls' home, she found boarded up windows (a result of previous vandalism), rotting wood framings around the windows, and cans of paint in the hallways. That first night she slept on a sunning cot and cried. The physical circumstances, the evidence of crime and sin in the city, made the job seem just too big.

But God had his own plan! As Mary and the other girls cleaned and painted, children dropped by, wondering what they were doing in their neighborhood. Bible clubs were established.

Twelve-year old Virgil accepted Christ. Two years later his mother, Shirley Gray, accepted Christ. She asked Mary's counsel about her family. Shirley's husband, who no longer lived with the family, used to beat Shirley and the children, causing hatred in the children's



Fred Stoesz spends time with teenagers.



Randy Plett fixing a neighbourhood child's bike.



Shirley Gray and Mary Thiessen teaching Elenore King, centre.

lives. Her 15-year old daughter threatened suicide; her 18-year old son was in a mental institution and often became violent; and her 13-year old daughter was in a correctional institution for fighting.

Mary helped Shirley see that as she allowed Christ's spirit of peace and joy to pervade *her* life, her children would see and respond to that. One year after Shirley's salvation, her 22-year old son, Ronnie, committed his life to Christ.

Mary often helped Shirley budget her meager income. She took her vegetables every week. When Mary discovered there had already been one electrical fire because of faulty sockets and switches, we fixed the electricity so her home was safe.

Today Shirley, together with Mary, is teaching the Bible to other women.

Each Canadian ministering with World Impact has experienced some of the same struggles and adjustments Mary faced. But, as Mary says, "I wouldn't be anywhere else!"

There is the challenge of thousands of lonely people, like Shirley was before she met Christ, moving without purpose or direction, needing to feel and experience Christ through his people. We are his hands and feet in the inner city. If we, his people, are not in the city, how will these hungry, poor and frightened people ever know who he is, or of his tremendous sacrifice for *them*.

Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden." That same commission is the reason seven Canadians have left their loving families and home communities to give of themselves in the city—teaching and discipling others who then will be able to teach others.

For further information write: World Impact, Inc., 2001 S. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90007.

Carol Froese

B.C. private schools promised funding

Independent schools in British Columbia will receive financial support, after more than 100 years of being ignored by the provincial government.

When and how much has not been decided, but the Social Credit government has passed legislation granting monies, fulfilling an election promise made last year.

Education minister Pat McGeer said the bill is historic, representing the first time any B.C. government has moved to provide such aid. At the present time parents sending their children to private Christian and independent schools have

been faced with the burden of double taxation.

The new legislation will not relieve that entirely, but with government funding, independent schools will be able to ease up on imposing heavier financial burdens on parents.

Many parents have viewed with growing alarm the valueless and morally bankrupt, secular education system as well as the Marxist orientation of the B.C. Teacher's Federation. The Federation has been scored by Education minister McGeer for its inability to standardize education procedures, and its failure to

discipline in the schools and concentrate on the three R's.

Private and independent schools representatives have expressed satisfaction with the terms of the bill, foremost among them being the Federation of Independent Schools Association (FISA).

Among those schools to receive direct financial aid will be the Mennonite Educational Institute in Clearbrook, and a number of Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) schools housed in Mennonite churches.

Gerry Ensing, executive director of FISA, described the action of the government as "very pleasing" but said it was 105 years overdue.

Other leaders of FISA reacted positively to the provincial government's new bill to bring financial support but balked at the five year qualification period imposed by the education minister. Under the qualifying time a new school has to go it alone for five years before it can get government support.

Nevertheless Ensing described the action by the government as "precedent-setting in Canada", indicating his satisfaction that not only independent schools of one particular kind, but all independent schools would be funded. He said independent school supporters in Manitoba and Alberta were already studying the Act.

Dr. John Waller, president of FISA, said it was a designed to bring aid from kindergarten to grade 12 to all independent schools, not just a section of them. The bill appeared timed to coincide with the opening of the FISA convention, which was held in Richmond recently.

Schools can apply for funding at three levels: (1) "non-instructional support grants" (money to cover school operating costs, excluding teachers' salaries); (2) "instructional support grants" (money to pay teachers' salaries); (3) "local support grants" (a grant through the local public school board which pays a percentage of the per pupil cost of school operation). No distinction is made between religious teachers and other teachers.

A given school could apply and receive funding under all three levels.

Different degrees of accountability and different criteria will govern funding at each of these levels. The Cabinet will determine the percentage of school costs covered by funding.

Schools seeking funds must meet the following three criteria: that no school permit or foster racial or ethnic superiority, religious intolerance, persecution or social change through violence; that school buildings be adequate; and that the school have been in operation for at least five years.

Administration of the new act will be the responsibility of an Inspector of