

Diet Standards Here Hit New Low For Underprivileged, Says Dietician

By OLIVE DICKASON

Montreal's underprivileged groups have hit a new low in nutritional standards, according to Nan Garvock, dietician-in-chief of the Montreal Diet Dispensary, a Red Feather service.

"I have never seen such a low standard in my 28 years of experience," Miss Garvock said in an interview yesterday. "And the low-income groups aren't the only ones who are suffering . . . high costs are also affecting the diets of middle-income groups."

If something isn't done to ease the rise of high rents and high food costs in which these people are caught, Miss Garvock said, "we will reap a harvest in sickness and disease. We're just paving the way for tuberculosis and other illnesses."

Most Expensive

G. B. Clarke, general secretary of the Family Welfare Association, another Red Feather agency, said Montreal is Canada's most expensive place to live and at the same time has the lowest level of wages.

Miss Garvock corroborated this with the statement that many of the families who come to the dispensary for help with diets have only \$26 income a week.

"Such things as rent and fuel must be paid," Miss Garvock said. "It's the diet that gets cut."

Rents are steadily rising in the city, she continued. A room which cost \$8 a week eight months ago went up to \$10 a week four months ago and is now going up to \$12 a week.

"This isn't a good or even an adequate room at that," Miss Garvock said. "What can a pensioner or dependent person do who is receiving \$40 a month?"

Not Enough to Eat

Many of the people who come to the dispensary for help are ill simply because they haven't got enough to eat, the dietician continued. "If we have a chance to give them the proper diets, we make new people of them in a few months," she said.

A minimum diet to maintain health, costs an average of 62.5 cents a day per person, according to present prices. Miss Garvock said that where once the dispensary could provide supplementary diets at 23 cents a day in cases where people could not provide enough for themselves and families, now it costs twice that much as the standard of health has dropped so low.

Mr. Clarke said the Family Welfare, which cares for about 2,000 people a month with financial aid, and gives social service assistance to another 1,500 a month, is faced with the necessity of allowing 50 cents a day per person for diet.

Elderly People

Elderly people form the largest single group who need financial help, Mr. Clarke said, with families deserted by husbands and fathers coming second, and illness, third.

Under present provisions, few of these people can be adequately helped, he continued. A family has to be deserted for five years before the wife and mother can claim help under the Needy Mothers Act; she can get no assistance under the Quebec Public Charities Act unless she is ill.

"Recent legislation at Quebec has improved the picture as far as prosecuting deserting husbands and fathers is concerned," Mr. Clarke said. "But what can you do if he prefers to go to jail rather than pay?"

Manitoba has answered that problem, Mr. Clarke said, by sentencing defaulters to work on prison farms, their wages going to support their families.

Prefers Job

"A bit of that sort of thing, and a man usually decides he would rather work at a better paying job, or in his own line, and support his family that way," Mr. Clarke said.

To get back to Montreal, he declared the Family Welfare has many clients who are actually starving. "We have increased our food budget on humanitarian grounds, but we still haven't been able to obridge the gap."

The agency has cut its clothing allowance in its attempt to meet the problem, he added.

Both Mr. Clarke and Miss Garvock agreed the situation has been steadily deteriorating, and that at