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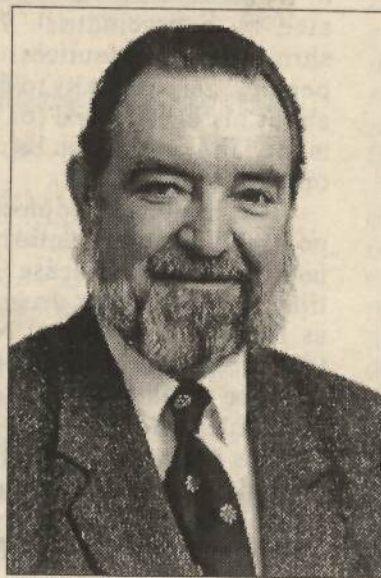
In the same breath, people call us courageous and pitiful. What is that about?

John Says:

That's pity peddling, misery merchandising — using pity to raise money to pay professionals to create clients.

an interview with Professor John McKnight by Josie B.

John McKnight is Director of Community Studies at the Institute for Policy Research and also Professor of Communication Studies and Urban Affairs at Northwestern University. He is author of *Community Building from the Inside Out* with John Kretzmann. His more recent book is *The Careless Society*, a collection of his articles and essays. To order it, see page 52.



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The money doesn't go to the people who are pitied. It's a bait and switch tactic. People who are labeled are the bait. The switch is that the money goes to pay professionals.



Why are we labeled at all?

There are ways we talk about people so that they are separated from and less than us. Those ways usually have labels that go with them — for instance, welfare recipient, ex-convict, developmentally disabled.

Labeling is a way of throwing someone out of the club. You're not one of us, you're not in.

It doesn't matter what the intentions of the labels are — whether it's good or bad, it all comes out the same, somebody

is going to make money by fixing you, by making you a client.

The people who call other people needy are the people who need needs.

Like a steel mill needs iron ore, health or human service agencies need needs. Needs are their raw material.

The way they locate needs is by placing a label on people. So as soon as they can label you, what they're trying to do is say — whether the label is good or bad — you are needy. ■

The idea of clienthood has reduced people's humanity.