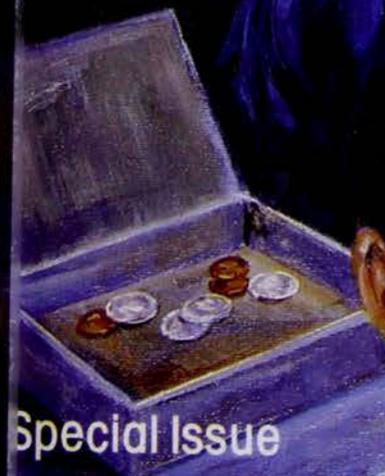


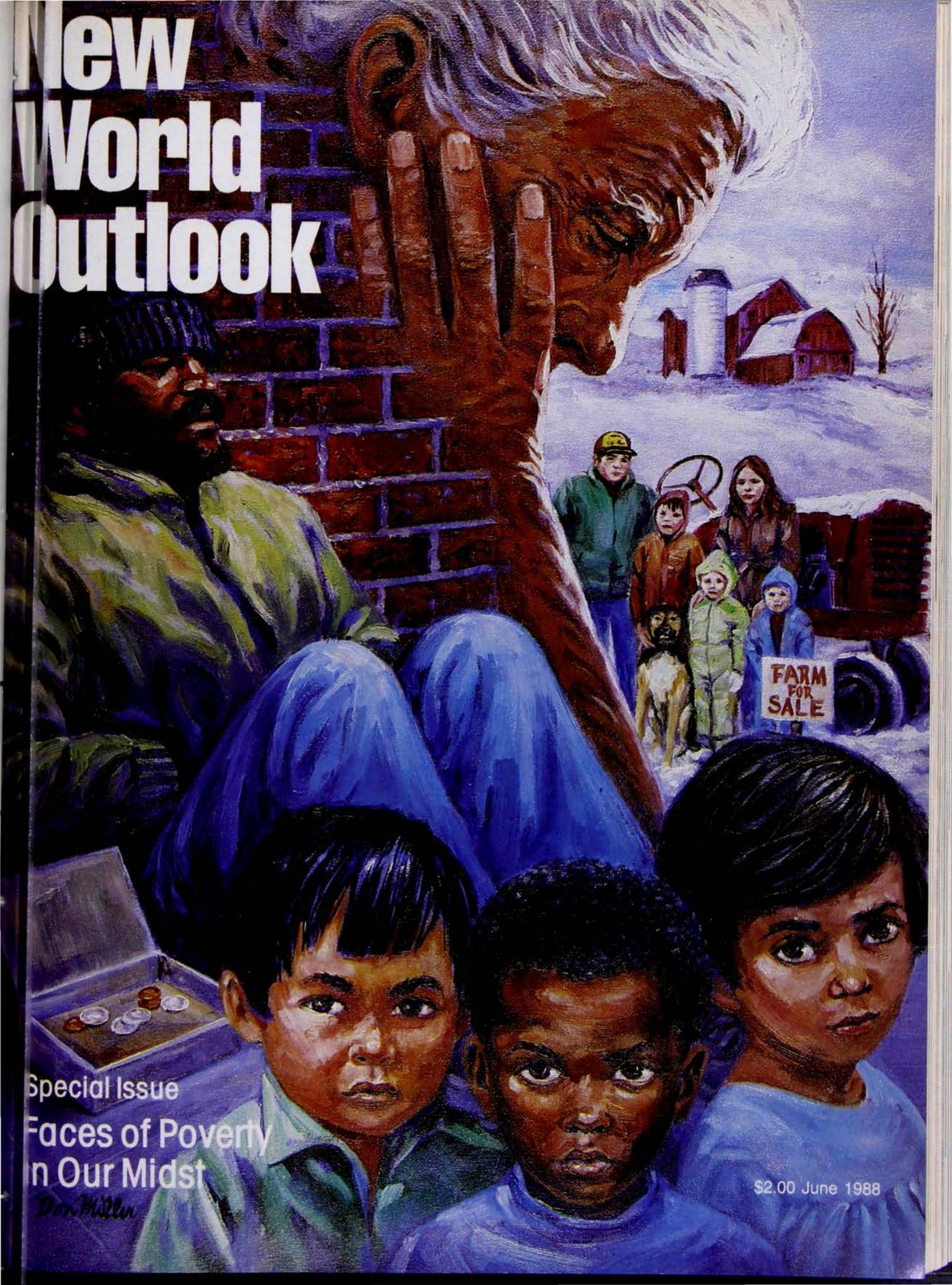
# New World Outlook



Special Issue  
Faces of Poverty  
in Our Midst

*Don Miller*

\$2.00 June 1988

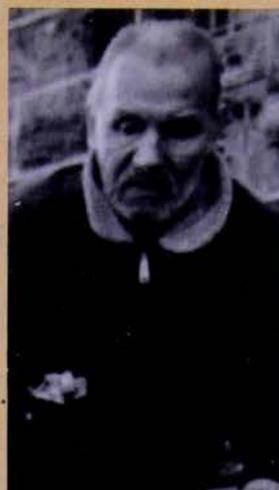




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# New World Outlook

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JUNE 1988

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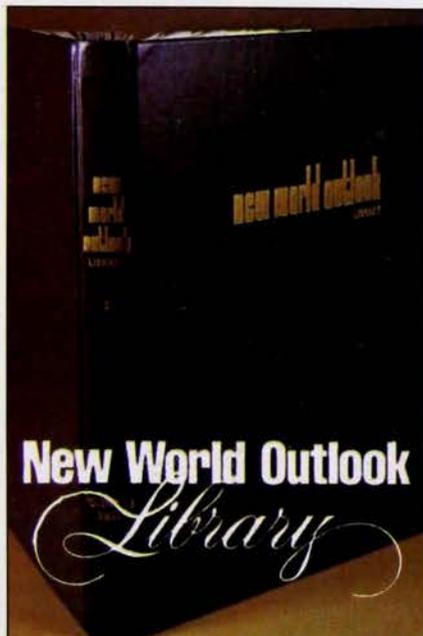
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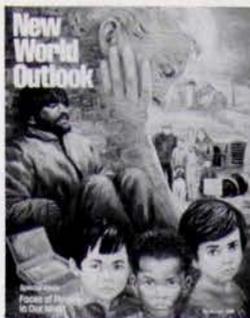
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# To Our Readers

The June issue of *NEW WORLD OUTLOOK* focuses squarely on the scourge of poverty in America today. This special issue is a collection of articles that are as compelling as they are discomfiting. The lead story, written by Appalachia community organizer Jim Sessions, exposes a "great unseen river" of poverty in America today. The author explains why the U.S. poverty rolls are swelling, and who the "new poor" are. He also offers a few tart suggestions on what might be done to improve the situation.

Another growing and very visible social ailment is homelessness. This problem is no longer confined to America's largest city centers, but has begun sprawling out into the suburbs and even into rural America, writes Luix Overbea, a reporter for the *Christian Science Monitor* in Boston. The churches and other voluntary agencies provide some shelter for the homeless, but a long-term solution require the commitment and intervention of the government.

Reporting from his native Detroit, free lance writer Herb Boyd, now living in New York, profiles a "Rust Belt" where many dreams are dying and despair is rampant among blue-collar workers whose jobs seem to have dried up for good.

The situation throughout America's agricultural heartland hasn't improved, either, reports the Rev. David Ostendorf, a United Church of Christ minister who heads Prairiefire Rural Action, a Des Moines-based farm advocacy group. Family farms continue to be lost, and small towns are drying up as farm-based economies deteriorate. The problem became so acute in Iowa last year that many farmers actually started receiving food stamps. The church is called to provide bold leadership rooted in a biblical vision of justice and community among people of the land, says Mr. Ostendorf.

The suffering of America's children in poverty is perhaps the most tragic, says Milly Hawk Daniel, a free lance writer based in New York City. Their suffering is a painful reminder that our nation is failing to provide a decent life for many of its young.

Also explored in this issue are the plight of migrant workers, and the relationship between U.S. military spending and poverty.

*NEW WORLD OUTLOOK*'s coverage of this subject continues into the July-August issue where three special articles focus on "America's 25 Poorest Counties," as identified by a survey conducted by the National Program Division of the General Board of Global Ministries. *NEW WORLD OUTLOOK* sent writers out to visit two of those counties—Lee County in Arkansas, and Shannon in South Dakota—and you will read their firsthand reports.

Poverty is a difficult, complex and uncomfortable subject of inquiry, but one that we must take seriously—and act upon—if we are to live out the mandates of our faith.

Our June issue also introduces you to the work of artist Don Miller. The Jamaica-born artist, who lives in Montclair, N.J., painted our composite cover for this issue, in keeping with a distinguished career of creating evocative images that speak to our times. Among Mr. Miller's best-known works is the King Mural in Washington, D.C., a tour de force documentation of the slain civil rights leader's life.

Throughout his nearly 40 years as an artist, Miller says he has felt most fulfilled when he uses art to express his concerns for social justice.

THE EDITOR

# Mission Memo

News and Analysis  
of Developments  
in Christian Mission

June 1988

GENERAL CONFERENCE UPDATE. The following are some highlights of the 1988 General Conference that took place in St. Louis, Missouri, April 26-May 6:

Sending Missionaries. The General Conference declined to ask the church's bishops to appoint full-connection ministers to the unofficial mission body known as the Mission Society for United

Methodists. The reasoning of the legislative committee which made that recommendation was that decisions regarding missionary appointments are made in annual conference by bishops and boards of ordained ministry. The committee argued that the General Conference cannot make specific recommendations. The Rev. James M. Lawson Jr. of Los Angeles, pointed out that the bishops have already recommended "firmly" that there should be only one mission-sending agency in the church--the General Board of Global Ministries...The delegates also voted to commend the GBGM for establishing a new evangelism unit which will proclaim the gospel in countries where it has not been heard or heeded.

Homosexuality. The General Conference voted by wide margins to retain the church's present stance on homosexuality. The delegates voted to retain the current ban on ordination or appointment as clergy of "self-avowed, practicing

homosexuals;" reasserted that "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching"; and reaffirmed that church funds cannot be used at national or international levels to "promote the acceptance of homosexuality." The delegates called for a four-year study of homosexuality with a report to be made at the 1992 General Conference.

Shell Oil Boycott. The General Conference voted May 5 to join the growing global boycott of Shell Oil products to protest apartheid, but implementation of the action was delayed pending a review by the UMC's Judicial Council. Shell has come under increasing attack by anti-apartheid groups worldwide because it has continued its refining operations in South Africa in the face of repeated requests that it quit the country. The UMC Judicial Council was asked in the closing hours of the conference to examine whether the delegates' action meets the denomination's guidelines for enacting boycotts. The boycott measure passed General Conference by a vote of 475-418.

Zimbabwe University. Development of the first United Methodist-related university in Africa in the 155-year history of the church's work on that continent was approved overwhelmingly by General Conference. The university is slated for development in Zimbabwe, at the traditional

Methodist center of Old Mutare. The Zimbabwe Annual Conference has donated a 1,000-acre site. Bishop Emilio de Carvalho of Angola called the university project "an African dream...born in Africa of African vision." Funding in the amount of \$20 million during the next four years by United Methodists in the U.S. has been asked to launch the university. Dr. Randolph Nugent, general secretary of the GBGM, will serve as an ex-officio member of the 25-member board of directors for the university, along with Dr. Roger W. Ireson, general secretary of the General Board for Higher Education and Ministry, which has primary administrative responsibility for its development. Bishop Carvalho will be a member of the board.

Miscellaneous Actions. The General Conference: Approved adoption of a new hymnal for the church that incorporates many new Wesleyan and ethnic-origin hymns as well as an extensively revised psalter...approved a new statement of doctrine and theology that is grounded in Scripture and the Wesleyan heritage and ready for study...approved a major policy document on the U.S. farm crisis that includes significant policy recommendations for church and state...denounced a growing movement within the United States to make English the nation's official language...condemned abortion as an "acceptable means" of birth control or "gender selection"...rejected calls for complete divestment by the Board of Pensions in companies involved in South Africa, calling instead for selective divestment and shareholder advocacy...rejected by a 557-409 vote an attempt to abolish the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women...rejected by 556-328 a proposed boycott of California table grapes...retained the phrase "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness" for clergy standards...approved a process for the possible expansion of the number

of bishops, four in the United States, and one in Africa...

SCARRITT GRADUATE SCHOOL. The Women's Division has officially purchased Scarritt Graduate School in Nashville, Tenn., and renovation of the campus has begun. The school will now become Scarritt-Bennett Center, a training and meeting complex with programs to train laypersons in spiritual development, Christian education, social justice and international issues. The new center will not grant degrees, but may affiliate with a college or seminary to offer some courses for credit. A newly constituted board of directors, with eight directors chosen by Scarritt's governing board and 12 by the Women's Division, will begin work this fall to design the program and hire staff.

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE HEAD QUILTS. J. Richard Butler, the embattled head of Church World Service, announced his resignation as chief executive of the relief and development agency of the National Council of Churches on May 19. The unexpected resignation followed an attempt by Arie R. Brouwer, NCC general secretary, to dismiss Mr. Butler last fall. More recently, the two ecumenical executives had undergone mediation sessions to help heal the rift that unfolded when Mr. Brouwer became increasingly impatient with Mr. Butler's efforts at "integration" of CWS into the overall structure of the council. Mr. Butler's resignation led his supporters on the CWS unit committee to call for an immediate investigation and assessment of "Dr. Arie Brouwer's ability to continue effectively as general secretary." The NCC Executive Committee rejected that request, however. Mr. Butler, who declined to elaborate on disagreements with Dr. Brouwer, wrote in a memorandum to the CWS Unit Committee that "one of the most difficult aspects of recent months has been working in an atmosphere in which I felt that my own efforts and

those of colleagues were not only characterized as unsatisfactory but were demeaned."

**BISHOPS TO BE ELECTED.** The UMC's five jurisdictional conferences will meet July 12-16 for their quadrennial election of bishops. Eleven bishops across the church in the United States and Puerto Rico are scheduled to retire. An additional vacancy was caused by the death of Bishop Walter Underwood of Louisiana. Another 10 bishops will complete normal terms of eight years in one assignment, and may be replaced.

**RED BIRD SCHOOL.** Red Bird School in Beverly, Ky., which has operated for many years as a cooperative venture between Red Bird Mission and county boards of education, will be a private school when it reopens in August. "There were too many problems in the church-state realm," explained Doran Porter, a staff member of the National Program Division of the GBGM, which gives administrative guidance to Red Bird Mission. The mission is part of the Red Bird Missionary Conference, which was a unit of the former Evangelical United Brethren. A conflict arose in early 1987 when the Kentucky Board of Education decided to require a written lease between the mission and the counties. But the mission staff and the county boards were unable to reach agreement on the terms of a permanent lease, and what input the Red Bird staff would have on the operation of the school. The mission will continue to be involved in the private school, however, and the new, private Red Bird School will have the support of the mission staff. Kentucky is one of the nation's poorest states, and has the the highest adult illiteracy rate.

**GATHERING OF CHRISTIANS.** More than 1,000 Christians, including 100 United Methodists, celebrated their diversity and prayed for unity

during a four-day ecumenical festival in Arlington, Tex., in late May. Billed as a "modern-day Pentecost," the event attracted Protestants, Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Evangelicals for workshops, sermons, forums and other activities. The Rev. Emilio Castro, general secretary of the World Council of Churches and an Uruguayan Methodist, preached on the relevance of Christ's cross in today's world. Pointing to South Africa, Dr. Castro said while everyone is against apartheid now, few are ready to sacrifice their profits to end it. Dr. Castro also had some strong words against the Rev. Jimmy Swaggart, although he wasn't referring to Mr. Swaggart's well-publicized sexual indiscretions. Dr. Castro criticized the TV evangelist's support of oppressive Third World governments, saying that through Mr. Swaggart's support of the apartheid government of South Africa and the military government of Chile, "he is doing more harm to the cause of Christ than whatever Christian truth he preaches."

**COMPROMISE ON ABORTION?** Joe Daniels, a 10-year veteran police officer in Jackson, Mississippi, has resigned from the force because he says he could not reconcile his responsibility to arrest anti-abortion protesters with his Christian faith. Mr. Daniels, a United Methodist, was called to help arrest protesters in a May 14 demonstration against a women's medical clinic in Jackson that performs abortions. Said Mr. Daniels, "I have confused the good guys with the bad guys."

**GRANTS FOR HEALTH CAREERS.** Leadership development grants for ethnic-minority persons interested in health-related careers are being offered by the Health and Welfare Ministries Program Department of the General Board of Global Ministries. Six grants of \$1,000 each will be made to Asian-Americans currently enrolled in school and preparing for

health-related careers; 10 grants of \$2,000 each will be offered to Hispanic persons. U.S. citizens who are of Asian-American, Native American or Hispanic descent and who can prove economic need may apply. Applications must be received by June 30, addressed to 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115.

**UNDOCUMENTED ALIENS.** At least two million immigrants still remain in the United States without legal status, according to Loren Stanton, an immigration specialist for the National Program Division of the GBGM. About the same number of undocumented persons applied for temporary residence under the amnesty program that expired May 4. If accepted under the amnesty program, they must pass English and civics examinations before qualifying for permanent status. "This is an opportunity for the local church to assist the immigrant who has made the first hurdle, but has two hurdles to go," says Craig Nelson, a National Division immigration specialist based in Miami. Through the GBGM's National Program Division and the United Methodist Committee on Relief Program Department (UMCOR), the church has been working to assist undocumented persons on both legalization and social service needs.

**MOZAMBIQUE ATTACKS.** Armed bandits continue to attack peasants in rural areas of Mozambique with increasing brutality, according to Mary Jean Tennant, a General Board of Global Ministries missionary who served in Mozambique since 1949. Yet the nation's churches, including its United Methodist congregations, have sustained their witness throughout, said Ms. Tennant, who was in the United States recently for a year's itineration before her formal retirement. Many pastors' homes have been looted, and few civilian targets have been immune from the raids of the bandits of RENAMO, the guerrilla insurgency that has

plagued Mozambique since its independence from Portugal in 1975. "Not a single church family has been untouched by this continuing tragedy," she said, yet the pastors have refused to quit leading their endangered churches in the bush. "They have tremendous courage," said Ms. Tennant. The mayhem wreaked by the RENAMO guerrillas follows last September's attack on the Methodist mission station at Cambine, in which several United Methodists were killed or kidnapped...United Methodists in the U.S. have continued their outpouring of support for Mozambique. In May, the Hudson North District of New York Annual Conference raised over \$25,000 for the UM mission hospital at Chicucue in Mozambique. The spirit-filled jubilee event demonstrated the deep commitment Methodists have for their colleague churches in crisis.

**PERSONALIA.** The Rev. LaVerne D. Mercado, former general secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines and a prominent United Methodist, was honored recently at a retirement dinner in Manila. Dr. Mercado was cited for his strong ecumenical leadership during the difficult years of the Marcos regime.

**DEATHS.** Floyd Shacklock, a retired United Methodist missionary who was a pioneering leader in the worldwide Christian literacy movement, died March 25 at the age of 89. For many years Dr. Shacklock served as head of the Committee on World Literacy and Christian Literature for the National Council of Churches... Eileen Townsley, a retired World Division missionary who served in India for 29 years, died April 20 at the age of 75... William Garris, a retired World Division missionary who served in Nigeria for 16 months, died March 17 at the age of 65... Karl Alm, a retired World Division missionary who served in Indonesia for 35 years, died February 5 at the age of 87.

## AMERICA'S GREATEST DEBT IS AT HOME

Despite the occasional reports that the nation's economy is rallying, that unemployment is at its lowest in a decade and that home construction is booming, there remain millions of poor, jobless and homeless people untouched by these supposed economic upturns. There are more than 20 million people out of work, with millions more underemployed or part of the vast number of discouraged workers, who do not show up on the statistical charts and graphs of unemployment.

One of the basic reasons for the swelling "underclass," those trapped below the poverty line, is widespread unemployment. This situation is particularly acute for the nation's farmers and those who depend on work in the steel, rubber and automobile industries. And the picture is no brighter for the working poor, many of whom cannot subsist on a minimum wage that has not been changed since 1981.

Ever since the Great Depression, Americans have looked toward the federal government for help during lean times. During the Depression, President Roosevelt launched a series of programs, including Social Security, unemployment compensation and the minimum wage, to provide economic stability and to assist the nation's impoverished. To remedy some of the social ills of the 1960s, President Johnson's Great Society established job training programs, legal aid and Medicaid.

While President Carter promised to continue the War on Poverty, by 1978 the rollback on gains for those mired in poverty was underway. The defeat of the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment bill was a clear signal of that. This retrenchment during the Reagan Administration has shown no signs of abating as the president has vetoed one bill after another that would have improved the conditions of the poor and the homeless.

Since he has been in office President Reagan has repeatedly blocked every opportunity to increase the minimum wage. The minimum wage, he claims "has caused more misery and unemployment than anything since the Great Depression." Reagan believes that raising the minimum wage from \$3.35 to \$4.65 an hour would lead to a loss of 880,000 jobs or more. He has promised to veto the bill now pending in Congress.

The Reagan Administration delivered another blow against the poor when it failed to maintain the supply of affordable housing. Last year only 47,000 units of housing for low-income, elderly and rural citizens were built. In New York City, there are more than 200,000 families waiting for public housing or so-called Section 8 rental housing (in which tenants are required to pay not more than 30 percent of their income for rent and utilities.) And if fortunate enough to have gotten your name at the head of the public housing list for the year, chances are you will

have to wait nearly 20 years before receiving a place to live.

Perhaps the most devastating of all the Reagan Administration slashes were in education, child nutrition, urban development grants and the Job Corps. All of these programs—these necessary social safety nets—were, according to the Reagan Administration, robbing the people of their work incentive, killing entrepreneurial initiative and devaluing the very concept of honest work. In short, Reagan has blamed the growth of the "welfare state" for America's economic woes.

Such finger-pointing would be ludicrous, if poverty in this country were not so terribly widespread. It is reprehensible for the Reagan Administration to blame the poor for their poverty when it has earmarked more than \$300 billion for the military budget, when it has consistently resisted increasing the minimum wage and has cost America some four million jobs through its trade deficit. With badly out-of-date trade agreements, America's annual trade deficit now has swollen to more than \$170 billion. Once the world's biggest creditor nation, America is now the biggest debtor nation.

But the real debt is not owed abroad; America's greatest debt and responsibility is at home, to its dispossessed, its displaced workers, its homeless thousands yearning to participate in the American dream. To rectify the predicament of the nation's poor would necessitate a domestic Marshall Plan that would not only revitalize the troubled economy, provide full employment and raise the minimum wage, but would also invigorate the nation's depressed spirit. □

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EMPOWERS PEOPLE

The church has historically sought to minister with those in poverty—by helping to feed, clothe and house them during trying times. No one questions this ministry. But the modern church has less to say about empowering people to lift themselves out of poverty permanently. Happily, the General Board of Global Ministries is seeking to do just that, through its growing investment in community economic development programs (CEDs).

CEDs help to empower poor and minority persons by providing financial support to community organizations. They address the problems of poverty, including unemployment, poor housing, and inadequate social services, and tap the local leadership potential within a community. This could result in economic revival for towns such as Coffeerville, Mississippi, and Hadley, Massachusetts.

With money provided by a CED revolving loan fund that was financed in part from the Board's National Program Division, a timber-cutting business was begun in Coffeerville, and workers who owned the Hadley print shop were able to expand

their press. Jobs were created and the new workers joined the ranks of tax-paying Americans.

Still, CEDs are not without their critics. Some observers question the wisdom of supporting a movement that may appear to be helping shift responsibility for the poor onto the private sector under the guise of corporate-sponsored community self-help programs. Other skeptics argue that social investing is too risky and amounts to throwing good money after bad—particularly in such financially volatile times as these. The memory of CED programs that failed during the '60s and '70s, largely because of poor management and bad investment decisions, haunts CED investment promoters today.

Yet others, including the church, recognize that investment in CEDs is one means of weaning some of the poor from welfare rolls and getting the unemployed back to work. And there is considerable reason to believe that American Christians *want* to support such initiatives. A study commissioned by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund found that Americans are motivated by religious beliefs to give first to charities that assist the poor, including the church. And churches do spend a relatively large proportion—22 percent—of their incomes on social programs, primarily in their own communities, says the American Association of Fund-Raising Counsel, an organization that monitors philanthropy in the United States.

Fears that money invested in CEDs would end up enriching intermediaries (venture capitalists and private contractors) instead of helping community groups have also been stilled—in The United Methodist Church, at least. That drawback, which characterized many CED programs funded during

the anti-poverty years of a generation ago, has been eliminated by new, more sophisticated management and better-trained managers.

*The Entrepreneurial Economy*, a monthly review of enterprise development strategies, says U.S. churches have hit their "second wave" of social investments and are once again, after learning from past experiences, re-entering the social investment arena. But this time it is through comprehensive approaches that promote specific social objectives and promise a financial return.

The publication also noted in its 1984 article that The United Methodist Church was moving to establish a major loan fund program for community development investments on a national level, and to hire an experienced community development practitioner to coordinate it. Well, the loan fund program is established and the practitioner was hired. Since 1985 the National Division has made 11 capital investments in community-based projects through "intermediaries," or community economic development corporations with revolving loan funds; all 11 projects have been on time with their regular interest payments on those loans. Jobs have been created and formerly unemployed people are now employed.

CEDs can work, with the proper management, and *long-term financial investments of substantial amounts*. CEDs are not welfare, and CED participants are not beggars. They are community-based business people who need solid financial backing, not skepticism and empty promises. The money made available for CEDs is not given away, it is invested, and it earns more than just a return in dollars. Profits include the betterment of human lives. □

## FIGHTING A WAR AGAINST DRUGS

"Just Say No" is a key slogan in the Reagan Administration's war against drugs. It is a simplistic phrase aimed primarily at those who have yet to experiment with drugs, but a vacuous, futile request to those already hooked. If the Administration is serious about a "Just Say No" policy, there are a few things it must say "Yes" to:

- A vigorous interdiction effort to halt the flow of drugs into our country. Nations that persist in trafficking in drugs should be penalized through foreign-aid policies and asset forfeiture. Plus, there are far too many instances of traffickers fleeing the country after receiving relatively low bail levels. These "Colombian acquittals" must cease if major suppliers are to be removed from the business.

- More money to bolster the meager funds now allocated for education, prevention, treatment, jails and drug enforcement officers. The \$300 million earmarked for the Drug Enforcement Administration in its war against drugs is a pittance compared to the \$300 billion defense budget. Thousands of lives are lost each year as a result of drugs, and it is time for the Administration to adjust its priorities.

- A more enlightened treatment program for those drug addicts afflicted with the disease. Drug addiction is a disease and its victims should be given the care and treatment that is due any sick person.

And a much more concerted effort must be made to determine which drug abusers are hardcore criminals. Not all drug-dependent people are serious criminals; the nature of the dependence and how it relates to the crime must be assessed and treated.

- The appointment of a full-time administrator or "drug czar" to oversee the nation's drug problem. Such an administrator would orchestrate the 24 agencies involved in narcotics and oversee a genuine national war on drugs.

- Convene a summit of all heads of state in the Americas to work out a coordinated strategy to win the war against drug traffickers.

The Reagan Administration's schizophrenic attitude to drugs, its way of saying one thing and doing another, must end. Speeches on one side and budget cuts on the other is no program at all. Congress too, must continue each year to fund fully the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986.

But of paramount importance is the role played by the Administration. The urgency of winning the war on drugs must first be conveyed from the White House if it is to be taken seriously by the country. If the Administration can say "Yes" to halting the flow of illegal drugs from overseas, upgrading education and prevention programs, and to providing more money to the federal, state and local drug enforcement agencies, the government will have taken a considerable step toward dealing with a problem that plagues our youth, and ruins thousands of lives. □

# In My Opinion

## What Has the Church Done About Poverty?

Mary Ellen Lloyd



When asked what the church has done about poverty, my first response was "not much." After more reflection, my initial answer still stands. Yes, the churches have distributed funds for emergency food cupboards and soup kitchens community development and public policy advocacy during the past decade or so.

Still, to be honest I would have to concede that as a church, we have not done what we promised, we have not done what we know how to do. We have fed some of the hungry and clothed some of the naked, but we haven't done much about poverty.

If we as a church had heeded the Gospel message and practised its teachings, perhaps there would not be 20 million Americans experiencing hunger every month simply because they cannot stretch their food stamps and cash any further.

Poverty and hunger are everywhere, all over the nation and the world. The problems have been increasing throughout the 1980s. Many of us in the church have learned that all the well-intentioned organizing and advocacy across the country can be rendered useless when the national leadership decides that the poor, the elderly and children do not matter.

Such was the case, of course, back in 1981, when the new Reagan Administration slashed nutrition programs in order to help pay for its military buildup. That year, the National Council of Churches (in which The United Methodist Church actively participates) sent a message to its member denominations entitled "The Re-Making of America?," which expressed the council's explicit concerns about where the new Administration was leading the nation.

The message contained many provocative and disturbing portents of the future, such as an era in which the public welfare would be

secondary to making America "number one" in the world. It also suggested "that the overriding moral and political issue for the nation is not so much in the specific proposals as in the pattern that they pose, in the vision of America and its values that lie behind them. For many, the New World was the New Jerusalem—from the oppression and misery that entrenched power and privilege perpetuated in the Old World they had fled."

As this message was heard in churches across the land, the ranks of the needy and hungry began to swell, and emergency food cupboards and soup kitchens, run primarily by the churches, could barely keep pace. Cut off from their benefits, the jobless and disenfranchised moved from city to city, searching for jobs and food.

Ironically, at the same time that personal income taxes paid by members of our churches were subsidizing the military build-up, their voluntary donations fed the needy because government programs designed to do so were being cut back. School breakfast and lunch programs were gutted; food stamp appropriations were tightened and altered to move thousands of Americans off the rolls; regulations were developed to prevent people from having access to food, not to support their "right to food as human beings."

In the early 80s, steel mills began closing in the Rust Belt cities—Pittsburgh, Weirton, W.V., Youngstown, Ohio, and others. Manufacturing plants began shutting down all over the nation, as management sought a cheaper labor force overseas. America's heartland farms from North Dakota to Texas were being lost to conglomerate agricultural operations. Unable to pay their debts and crippled by falling prices for their grain, family farmers were being driven from the land they

had nourished for generations. Too often, pastors didn't stand by a farm family that was threatened with foreclosure. For black farmers in the Southeast, the problem was worse. They are losing their land at twice the rate of white farmers.

Through it all, the church has been lagging far behind in the issues of justice. Lutheran clergyman E.W. Mueller said it so well: "The church is at fault, for we have preached a personal salvation and not a community salvation."

Since the advent of the Reagan administration, churches have spent millions of dollars assisting church and community organizations nationwide to distribute food and in some areas to create jobs through economic development programs.

But until the church truly "turns its face toward Jerusalem" to change the structures of our economic system to produce a "fair price" for a product, to create equitable systems of food delivery and to be vigorous participants in global food self-reliance, poverty will continue to reign.

It will not matter how many hunger programs we organize, or how much money we give out for economic development. We will not be working toward the rebuilding of our economic and ethical foundations, the principles that ultimately govern the distribution of wealth in the United States. And we will not be sharing our bread with the larger "community" that is our country.

In his new book, *Breach of Promise*, Jim Gittings, a well-known church journalist, closes with this statement about U.S. poverty: "Our faith teaches that God is just. Late or soon, with our initiative or without it, God's justice will indeed 'roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.'" □

Mary Ellen Lloyd is director of domestic hunger and poverty programs for the National Council of Churches, New York City.

# The Nation's Poor

## A Great Unseen River

By James Sessions

*"Across the river from where Beckman sits, stripped of dignity, there is a young woman named Angela. Two years ago, at 16, she had a child, Shawna, who suffers from cystic fibrosis. The state refused to assist in any way because the two of them lived with Angela's mother, who works . . . It flows, this scar of poverty here does, like a great unseen river. Issues of no money, no transportation, inadequate medical care and homelessness are invisible."*

Mike Barnicle, *Boston Globe*, February 1988

Like Rip Van Winkle, we publicly awaken to the tragedy of massive poverty in the United States of America every other decade or so. It was no less the case in 1879 when Henry George wrote *Progress and Poverty*, or Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* in 1890, or Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* in 1906, or twenty-six years ago when Michael Harrington wrote *The Other America—Poverty in the United States*, than it is today with homeless families and hungry children across the country.

We awaken now to a poverty with many faces: the displaced worker, the bankrupt farmer, the single mother and children, the unemployed miner, the homeless, the hungry. It touches young and old, women and men, whites and people of color, and almost all sectors of the economy. Even the security of the middle class and its children is threatened. While poverty has "expanded" to reach new sectors and threaten new victims, it has also deepened and become more intractable. A "permanent underclass" now exists without the hope or chance that previous generations had to lift itself out of poverty. According to a recent Urban Institute report, that under-

class has tripled since 1970.

The social context and the structure of poverty have fundamentally changed. The statistics are overwhelming, but the lived reality is far more staggering. It is a complex social, economic, and political issue that must become the subject of immediate and widespread debate.

What is poverty? Poverty is the lack of income needed to acquire the minimum necessities of life. The United States Census Bureau, long in the business of defining the macabre and political boundary line of poverty, set the official poverty level for 1985 at \$10,989 in income for a family of four. One in seven Americans—33.1 million, were poor in 1985. The poverty rate in 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, is higher than the poverty rate for any year in the 1970s, including the recession of 1974-75.

The poor are not only getting more numerous but they are getting poorer: adjusting for inflation, incomes of the poor fell further below the poverty line by some \$10 billion between 1980 and 1986. Meanwhile, the rich are getting richer. In 1986, the wealthiest 20 percent of the population amassed the greatest share of income, and the poorest 40 percent received the smallest share recorded since 1947, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Who is affected? Americans have long been taught the stereotype that the poor are simply lazy and lack character, initiative, and self discipline. But struggles over civil rights and women's equality have revealed a fundamental truth: *Opportunity has never been equal in America*. The second stereotype of poor people, that they are on the

dole, proves to be no more reliable than the first. Most of the poor people in the United States do not receive welfare payments. Only one-third of the 32.4 million poor people in this country receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the principle public assistance program for poor families with children.

### The Historically Poor

Persons born Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, female or poor in America have traditionally faced stiff obstacles to education, good jobs, promotions, and prosperity. The poorest Americans have been buried in the deep South, the Appalachian mountains, the Indian reservations, the barrios of the Southwest, and the urban ghettos. They did not lack ambition or ability. Instead, the plantation system, the migrant system, the mining system, the Indian welfare system, all created long odds against a person's breaking out, and much of this tradition of shame continues today. It is the continuing legacy of hundreds of years of discrimination and cumulative disadvantage.

Blacks living in poverty number 8.9 million today; poor Hispanics number 5.3 million or 29 percent of the nation's Hispanic population, the highest level ever; the poverty rate for white Americans was 11 percent, for blacks was 31.3 percent. Since 1970, almost two-thirds of Appalachia's counties have declined economically. At the end of 1985, four-fifths of Appalachia's counties had an official unemployment rate of over 20 percent.

### Newcomers to Poverty

There are also new faces in the ranks of poverty today. Massive



*These faces tell the story of poverty in the rural Mississippi Delta.*

cuts in public anti-poverty programs, falling wages, and the loss of full-time jobs have been the primary causes of rising poverty in the 80s rather than older patterns of unemployment. Since 1981, federal cuts in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, Medicaid, Food Stamps, and job training programs to support low-income families have shattered the public buffer against poverty.

Abandoned mills of the Northeast and bankrupt farms of the Midwest represent millions of people in deep trouble: steel workers driving cabs, auto workers delivering pizza, farm families moving to apartments, the dispossessed having no place to move, and nothing to drive or deliver, mothers and children with no place

**The social context and structure of poverty have fundamentally changed. The statistics are overwhelming and the reality is staggering.**

to live and no place to go. These are small players in a deliberate strategy designed to reduce inflation, trim budgets, fight wars, and keep incumbents in office.

The new poor are both younger and older. Poor children live in poor families, and constitute 13.6 percent of all those in poverty. In 1986, 20.5 percent of all American children, and almost a quarter of those under 6 years of age, lived below the poverty line. Half of all black children live in poverty. The poverty rate for black children under eighteen years of age in 1986 was 43.1 percent—more than three times the rate for all American children (13.6 percent). For Hispanic children, the poverty rate was 37.7 percent in 1986.

According to a January 1988,

## The failure of the minimum wage to increase with the cost of living has pulled families into poverty.

report, 20 million young high school graduates across the country are locked into low-paying jobs that cannot support a family or ensure financial security. This group, aged 16-24, makes up that half of American youth who do not go to college. Their wages have gone steadily down since the early 1970s. They miss out on health insurance and other benefits, and receive inadequate earnings to start a family or even live independently.

The poverty rate for the elderly has actually declined to 12.4 from 16.3 percent in 1973, and 35.2 percent in 1959. Although the problems our elderly face are still great, their story shows that decent public policy can make a difference. The raising and indexing of Social Security benefits in the 60s and 70s substantially reduced poverty for the elderly. Still, almost 3.5 million elderly persons lived in poverty in 1986, with women bearing a larger share of the burden.

Some of the new poor are white and come from the ranks of the middle class. Whites accounted for 81 percent of the net increase in the poverty population between 1979 and 1985. Many of the new poor have fallen out of the middle class. In 1986, the percentage of total national family income received by the "middle fifth" of the United States population dropped to 16.8 percent, the lowest share for this group since 1947. Increasing numbers of middle-class people left out of the uneven recovery of the past four and a half years are sliding into poverty.

But it is the *working* poor who constitute the fastest growing component of poverty. The working poor significantly outnumber the welfare poor. In 1986, 41.5 percent

of all poor people over the age of 14 worked. Some of the working poor are underemployed, but many are simply underpaid. The number of full-time, year-round workers who are poor is increasing. In 1986, two million of those who worked full time and year round were poor, an increase of nearly 50 percent over the 1.36 million full-time working poor in 1976.

### The Economy

In this richest of nations, why are the poor getting poorer, the working poor not making it, and middle income people sliding into poverty? Where has the money gone?

America has been quietly slipping backwards economically for two decades. In 1973, the average 40-year old man earned \$28,118 (in constant 1984 dollars). Ten years later, at age 50, he was making \$4,000 less, or \$24,132. The growth rate of real gross national product and the rate of real productive investment have declined in each successive business cycle since the mid 60s.

The corporations fought back against the economic decline, trying to reduce costs by targeting employees and their families through union busting, threats of plant shutdowns, and demands for concessions in wages, benefits and working conditions. The corporate strategy succeeded in lowering income, decreasing safety and health, and eroding environments.

Except for the rich, financial resources and support for daily life come from three basic sources: jobs, family, and the government. All three traditional sources of income were affected by this corporate strategy.

### Employment

There is no way out of poverty for people unless they make enough money. So the most fundamental step away from the dead end is for people to have jobs that pay adequate wages.

Changes in the job market contributed to increased poverty as manufacturing jobs were lost (at least 2 million since 1979), the service sector grew, and family farms collapsed. Of the 10.8 million Americans who lost their jobs, owing to plant closings and a poor economy between January 1981 and January 1986, nearly a third were still unemployed at the end of the period, and more than 30 percent were working at new jobs for 80 percent of their previous salaries. The 40-year old of the mid 1980s is earning about 17 percent less than the 40-year olds of 1973.

Most people today work in offices, hospitals, banks, restaurants, food stores, etc. whereas their grandparents were more likely to work in factories or on farms. Nearly three out of four wage earners now work in a service job.

Part-time jobs, many of which are in the service sector, have grown much faster than full-time jobs during the 80s. Nearly 20 million Americans work part time. The expansion of part-time work has far more to do with employers' desires for a flexible, often cheap labor force than with workers' preferences for shorter schedules. Nearly 10 million part-time workers have no health insurance and three million part-time workers and their families live in poverty.

As many as three million new jobs are temporary. Companies are using full-time temporary workers to lower costs. "Tems" are typically paid less, receive fewer bene-

*Dilapidated housing in Far Rockaway, in the New York City borough of Queens.*



fits than regular full-time workers, and they can be (and are) laid off at a moment's notice.

Since the early 1980s, a lethal combination of low farm prices, high interest rates, ever-mounting debt, and declining net worth tied to sinking land values has been crippling American family farms, and creating economic refugees across the country. Thirty-seven thousand families in the U.S. lost their farms in 1983. Georgia, Illinois and North Carolina lost four thousand farms each that year. During the 1980s, net farm income has averaged nearly 40 percent less than in the 1970s.

The failure of the minimum wage to increase with the cost of living has pulled more families down into poverty. Minimum wage workers have suffered a 27 percent cut in the purchasing power of their \$6,834 annual wage. Two-thirds of all minimum wage earners are adults working to support themselves and their families. At the current minimum wage, two full-time working adults with two children would still be at the poverty level.

#### **The Family**

The second source of financial support is the family. There has been an explosion in the number of families headed by mothers. Fewer than one in five American families today fits the model of a husband who serves as sole breadwinner and a wife who tends strictly to the house and kids. In 1986, 42 percent of all black families were female-headed; the white figure was 13 percent. The numbers show that female-headed households are far more likely to be poor.

Poverty risks are especially high for female-headed families, even

The last four and a half years of economic expansion have resulted in the average family income being less than it was in 1973.

though the number of women entering the labor force jumped from 30.3 million to 44.5 million, a rise of 47 percent between 1970 and 1980. The majority of these women found themselves in low-paying, dead-end jobs. The median income of women in full-time positions in 1980 was \$11,590 compared to that of \$19,172 for males.

If family and employment cannot provide enough income, the task falls to government. From fiscal 1981 to 1988, after adjusting for inflation, spending on low-income non-entitlement programs was down a staggering 54 percent or \$44.7 billion. Since 1981, housing subsidies have been cut by \$32 billion, accounting for roughly three-quarters of the overall decrease. Between 1982 and 1985, the Food Stamp program was cut by a total of \$6.8 billion eliminating or reducing food for 18 million people. School lunches, breakfasts, and child care food for poor children, and summer food programs were cut by 29 percent in 1981 budget cuts. Job training for welfare recipients was down 81 percent, housing assistance for the elderly and handicapped down 47 percent, and legal services for the poor down 28 percent. Federally assisted housing funds for low-income housing have been cut by 75 percent since 1981, while median rental costs rose 120 percent. All of these cuts while the national defense budget was increasing by 40 percent, from 1980 to present, adjusted for inflation.

Though millions of eligible poor have never been reached by government programs, and the agencies are often cumbersome, slow and inept, still the success and cost-effectiveness of a number of programs is evidence that public

and social programs can improve the lives of millions of citizens most at risk.

#### What is to be done?

Changes in the economy in the last two decades have meant a fading of the American dream. In too many cases, jobs no longer mean opportunity or increased income. The U.S. economy's "growth" has produced decline instead of progress. The last four and a half years of economic expansion have resulted in the average family income being less than it was in 1973.

A rationale behind the Reagan cuts in low-income programs was that states and the private sector would rush in to fill the gap. Marian Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund says that the reduction in federal aid has severely hindered state governments in their efforts to provide adequate child care programs. That holds true for every other low-income program.

There is the laudable "Hands Across America" response, which generates some immediate reaction, some money, and some attention, but fails to attack, or even address, the political, social, and moral questions. This approach makes sense for natural disasters, where the immediate need is money and attention. But for many issues, such as homelessness or education, they can do more harm than good: giving the people the feeling that significant forces are being mobilized and that if they only participate for an afternoon they have done their part.

There is an urgent need for a public commitment that makes a growing standard of living and fairness for all the American people



the central goal of this economy.

National policies designed to increase the incomes of, and public service for, the scores of millions of the poor among us, would lift the American economy, increase tax revenues without rate increases, and balance the federal budget in a stable way.

One embarrassingly obvious but necessary step is to raise the minimum wage. At \$3.35 an hour, where it has been since 1981, the minimum wage is long overdue for



Misery still stalks residents of Tunica, Mississippi, site of the environmental pollution that created the notorious "Sugar Ditch" a decade ago.

a significant increase. This simple step will lift millions of Americans out of poverty and reduce inequality. Further steps would be to reduce barriers to workers' organizations, encourage workers direct participation in planning and implementation of investment and reorganization of production.

Budget cuts in human services, sluggish productivity, a shrunken middle class, a redistribution of wealth from the poor and middle classes to the wealthiest, the ex-

change of high-paying manufacturing jobs for low-paying service jobs, a corporate strategy to reduce labor costs, a historic trade crisis, and a swollen military budget that weakens the civilian economy have all shaped economic policy in the 1980s and increased poverty for millions of Americans.

This year could signal the alarm that may waken America from the slumbering morality of the 80s. During the next two decades this country is going to have to wrestle

with profound and basic economic policy issues. Economic power is too important to be left to chance or to the greedy. We need a government of the people to shape economic policy in the best interests of all of the people. □

*James Sessions is director of the Commission on Religion in Appalachia.*

# HOMELSS IN AMERICA

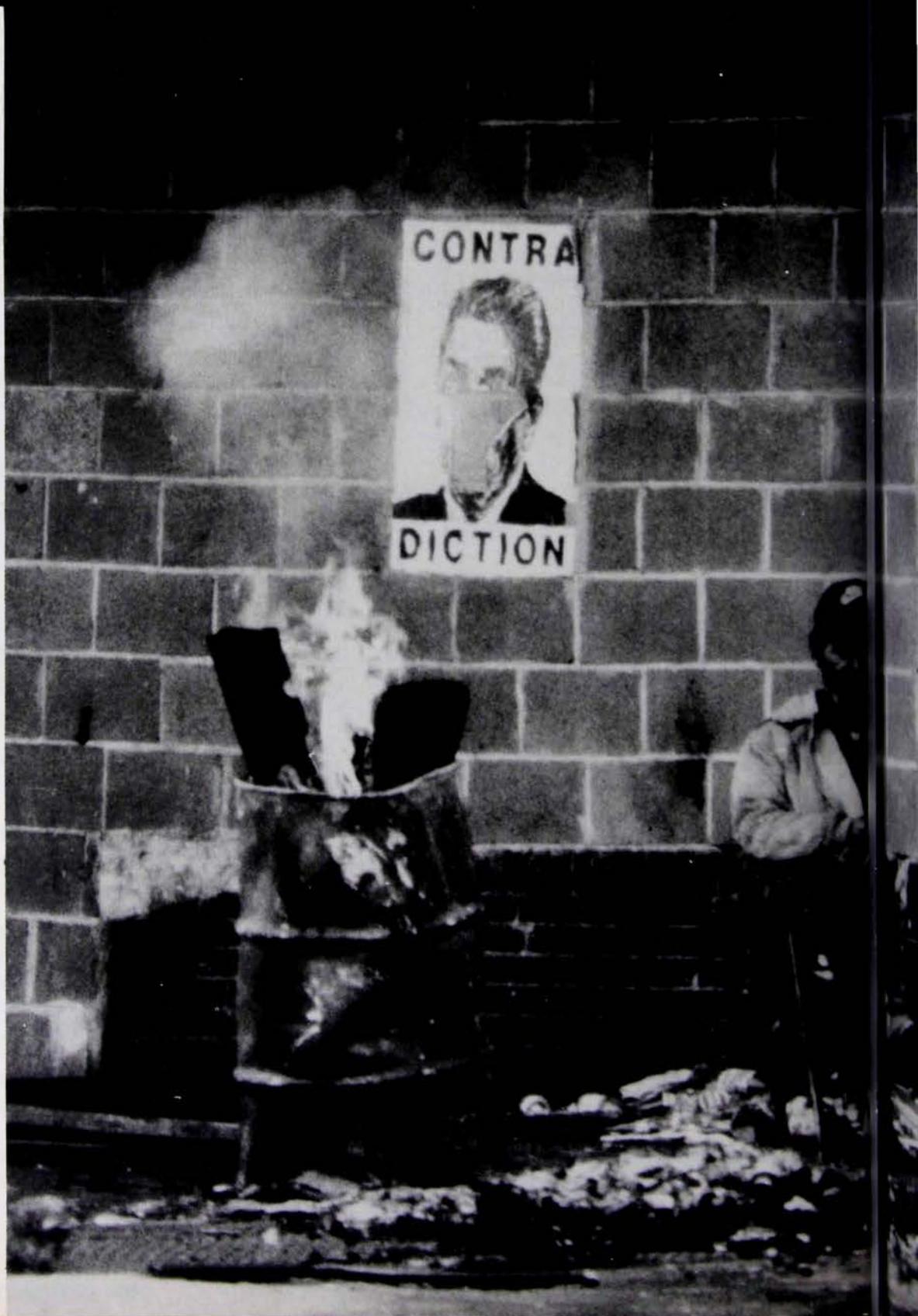
By Luix Virgil Overbea

A nameless horde of Americans roams the streets in the dark of night—most often on the fringes of downtown or in the downtown area itself—in the nation's big cities, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Dallas, and many smaller cities. They may sleep on the sidewalks, in open parks, on all-night subway trains, in bus and railroad stations, in abandoned buildings. During the 1980s they have become so numerous that they require constant attention from public agencies, from private nonprofit organizations, from religious congregations.

Being homeless in America was once the exclusive prerogative of alcoholics, the mentally ill, and drug abusers, people down on their luck, people who once were "on top," but now derelict because of some character flaw. They were helped by such agencies as the Salvation Army, churches, synagogues, or mosques and various local nonprofit groups on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, or on some other special occasion.

A new breed of homeless people, however, is emerging today. They require more than open public buildings, subway cars and abandoned buildings. They require shelters. They are members of families—one-parent, usually the mother, and her children; the working poor family that cannot afford market-rate living quarters, and the once-affluent family that becomes displaced when the wage earner's company moves to an area or country that offers tax breaks and other enticements.

Comprehensive, factual data on the homeless is fuzzy. General statistics are tossed out to the public, but factual information is



# SS

*Urban scene in downtown Washington, D.C.,  
not far from the White House.*

limited.

Chief advocate for the homeless is the National Coalition for the Homeless which calls itself "a federation of individuals, agencies and organizations committed to the principles that decent shelter and housing and adequate food are fundamental rights in a civilized society." The National Coalition was organized in 1982 as a clearinghouse to share information and resources. Headquartered in New York City, it operates a lobbying office in Washington, DC.

Serving as big brother to the homeless is the public sector, including the federal government, state governments, and local authorities. Federal programs are coordinated by the Interagency Council on the Homeless, a committee of the President's cabinet as a whole with Secretary Samuel Pierce of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as chairperson.

Another helping agency is the Health Care for the Homeless Program, an advocate for the health of the homeless, especially of mothers and their children.

Who is a homeless person? No agency, no advocate offers a definition. A working description could be a person who has no permanent place to stay day and night, no permanent place to sleep, no permanent place to bathe, no place to call home.

In the old days volunteers knew just where to find the homeless when they wanted to make a holiday such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter something special. They went to Skid Row, to abandoned buildings, and to hastily built tents, lean-tos and the like. Most of the homeless were men, many leaders once in their fields of

endeavor, now down on their luck, eagerly accepting a handout, be it food, clothing, or drink.

Other homeless Americans were the abandoned elderly, usually female, often called "bag women" because they carried their belongings in a bag or rummaged garbage cans for discarded food. Their families no longer wanted them or they had outlived all their friends and relatives. Not all of the homeless were adults; some were unwanted children consigned to orphanages but who had run away. They were always helped at Christmas time through various charities, and because of response generated through newspaper, radio and television appeals.

Today, the homeless person is no longer a stereotype. Many of today's homeless people are families often crammed into a single hotel room in many cities. Some are blue collar and white collar families, cast aside by their employers who transplanted factories to other sites.

The National Coalition for the Homeless called these people "Pushed Out: America's Homeless Thanksgiving—1987," in its special study by that name. This report said as many as 3 million people, adding women and children to the usual count of men, were homeless by the end of 1987. This total was a 25 percent increase over the total for 1986, the report says.

Women, children, and families are being added to the usual masses of homeless men, all because the nation is suffering from a diminishing supply of affordable housing, says the study. The report reviewed changes among the homeless populations of 23 cities of varying sizes. These findings make the homeless picture more intimi-

A new breed of homeless people is emerging today. They are families often crammed into a single hotel room.

dating than it has ever been in the past:

—Families with children are the fastest growing group of homeless, now 40 percent of the total.

—A growing number of homeless people are among the working poor, not financially able to afford available housing. These people are being "pushed out," says the report because many real estate developers follow the path of greatest profits, conversion to condominiums.

—The greatest cause of homelessness is the lack of affordable housing.

—The number of homeless persons is increasing by 25 percent a year.

The national Health Care for the Homeless Program notes that city homeless populations are 60 percent single men, 28 percent families, and 12 percent single women. The average age is 34. Demands for emergency shelters are unmet, according to a U.S. Conference of Mayors' 25-city survey, noting that people are turned away from emergency shelters in 72 percent of these cities because of lack of resources.

The National Coalition's survey, published in January 1988, presents a comprehensive and compelling picture of homelessness in the United States. The survey listed the following problems of the homeless:

—Decent and safe shelters.

—Legal counsel to help the homeless to gain shelter in all parts of the nation.

—The right to have food as well as shelter.

The National Coalition seeks to provide both short- and long-range planning for the homeless. It has satellite organizations in each

*Soup kitchens run by churches, like the one pictured here in New York City, have tried to soften the sting of urban poverty.*

of the 50 states. They in turn have local groups in most major cities.

#### **Federal Action**

Congress has passed legislation to help the homeless in emergency situations as well as in resolving problems on a long range basis through various acts:

*Homeless Eligibility:* Passed October 1986, this act makes residents of homeless shelters eligible for food stamps; qualified for benefits of Social Security, Medicaid, Aid to Dependent Children, and veterans' benefits. They also may utilize the Job Training Partnership Act.

*Homeless Housing Act:* Passed October 18, 1986, this act creates two forms of temporary shelter, emergency shelter and transitional housing.

*Stewart B. McKinney Act:* Signed by President Reagan on July 22, 1987, this act provides the foundation for federal action to help the homeless. It provides funds for five programs—Emergency Shelter Grants Program, Transitional Housing, Permanent Housing for the Handicapped, Supplemental Assistance Program, and Section 8 (subsidized housing) Assistance for Single Room Occupancy Dwellings.

Health Care provides project centers in 19 major cities. It is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Pew Memorial Trust co-sponsored by the United States Conference of Mayors. Its headquarters are at St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City, administered by the hospital's Department of Community Medicine.

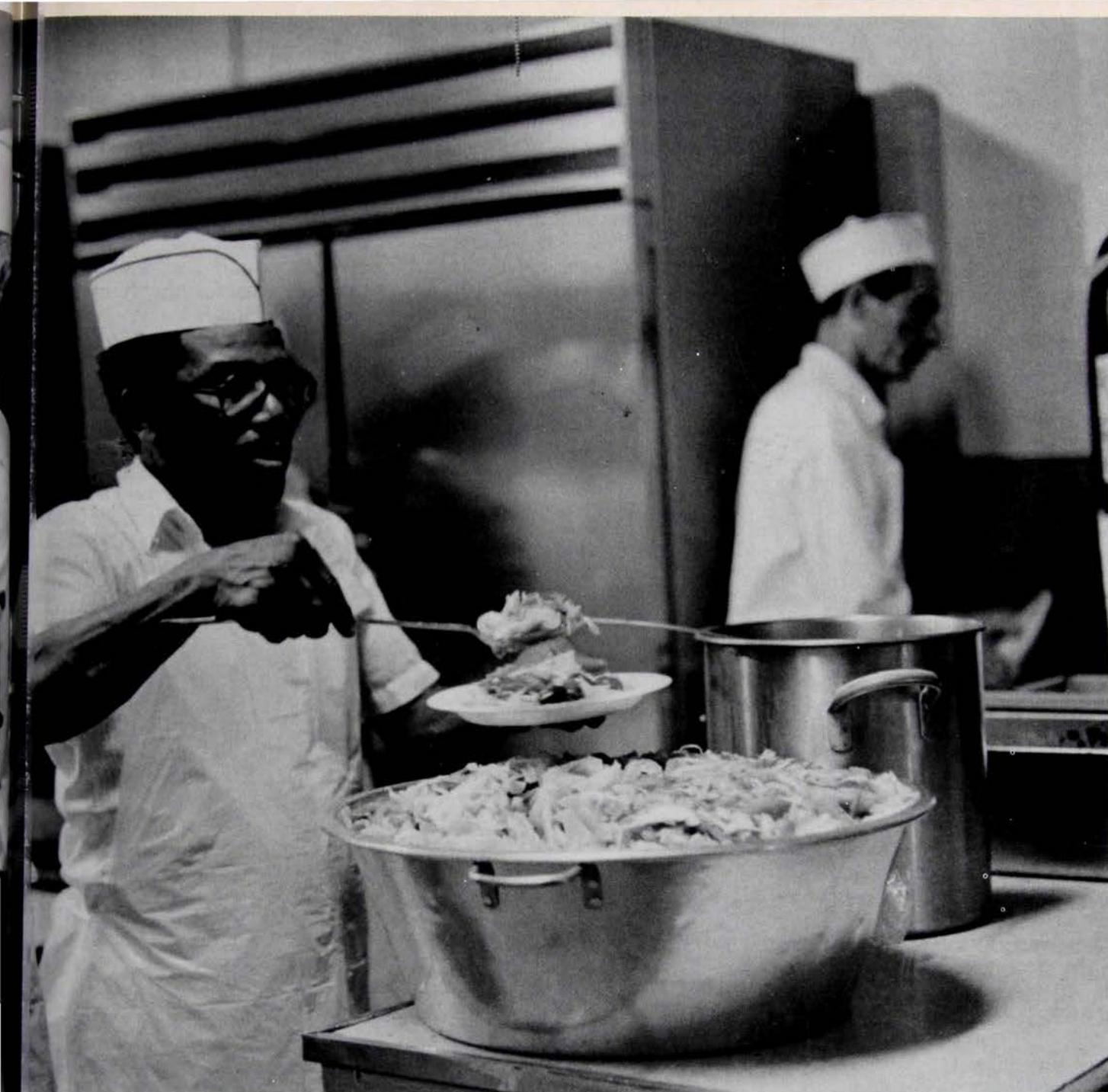
What do advocates of the homeless want?

"We need to look at the homeless as human beings," says Timo-



thy Hager, assistant director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, head of the Washington, DC office. "These people have become a national problem, spreading from the cities to the rural areas. The largest concentrations are in New York and Los Angeles."

Hager wants to see more examples of good programs, models that can be used by other communities. "Homelessness has become an expensive problem and a social problem, too," he says. "In New York, vagrancy laws are used to keep them out of Grand Central Station and similar public places. The Salvation Army, the United Way, and other agencies don't have the facilities to serve the homeless."



"Even public schools don't serve homeless children in many communities. The law says they have to have a permanent address. They are not admitted to schools if they are homeless, and these children need school the most."

Programs offered by the federal government are promising, Hager says, but they are hampered by budget limitations. The National Coalition sees hope in a proposed Homeless Persons' Survival Act, introduced to Congress in June, 1986 by Sen. Albert Gore (D, Tenn.) and Rep. Mickey Leland (D, Texas). Some elements of the proposal have been adopted by Congress and by various states and cities. It calls for emergency relief, preventive measures, and long-term so-

lutions to homelessness.

"The outline of this bill can be a model for states and local governments," Hager says. "It offers them federal benefits."

Emergency relief includes a national right to shelter, health and mental health care, emergency shelter to parents with infants, and emergency assistance to homeless youth. It also removes barriers to education.

Preventive measures include barring unnecessary evictions from subsidized housing, providing rental assistance to avert evictions and foreclosures in private housing, and modifying Aid to Families with Dependent Children rules that lead to the break up of families in order to receive more benefits.

Long-term solutions include increases in subsidized and public housing units, opening of abandoned housing to the homeless, and development of community-based residences for the mentally ill homeless. The National Coalition urges Congress to act on long-range proposals, Hager says.

"Homeless people need access to health care," pleads Dr. Philip W. Brickner, director of Health Care for the Homeless Program and co-author of a new book, *Health Care of Homeless People*, published by the Springer Publishing Co., New York City. It was written in collaboration with colleagues from across the nation.

"Municipalities across the country have begun to provide shelter



and food for the homeless, but health care programs are largely unavailable . . . Health care services should be available to homeless persons at the places where they gather."

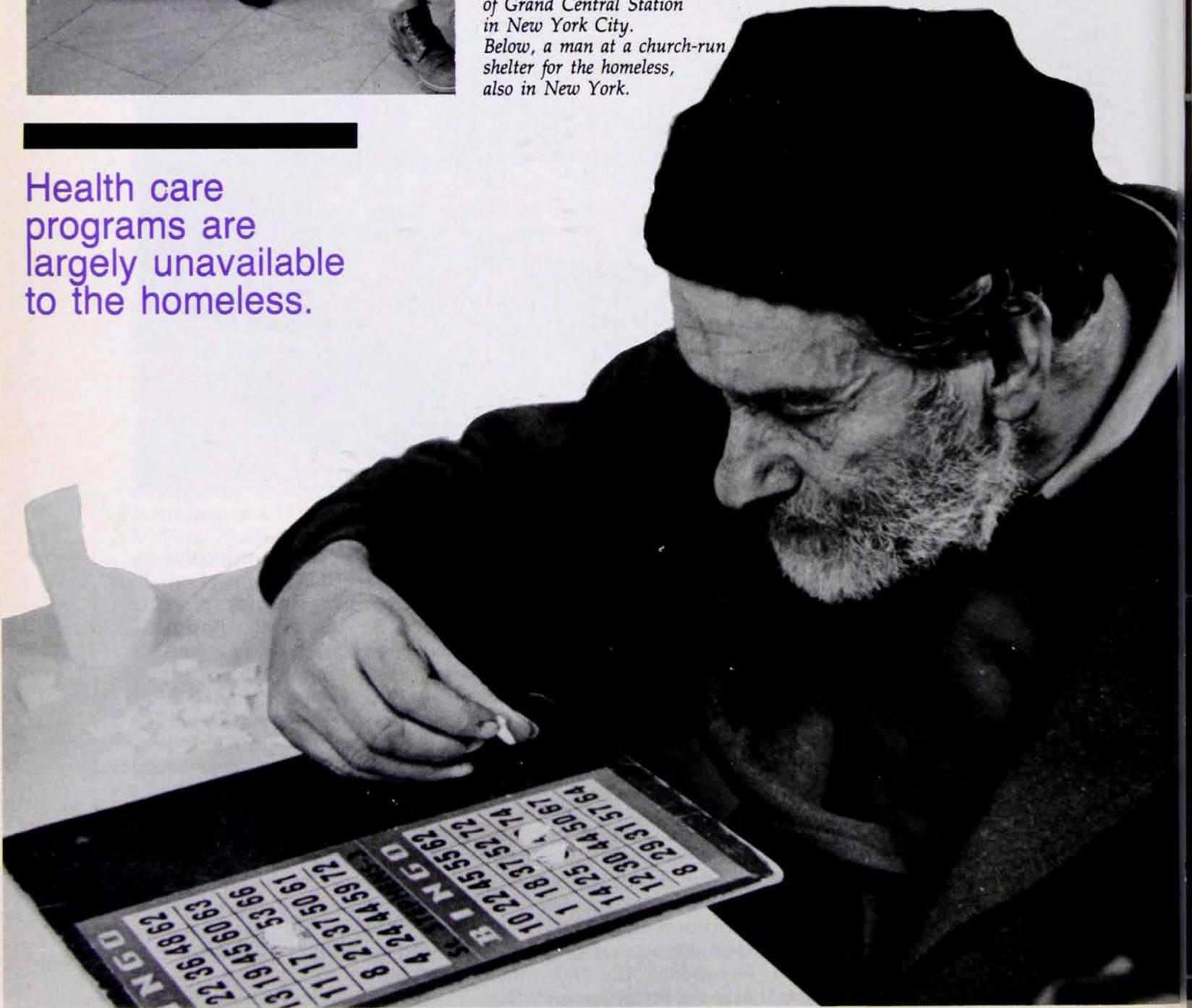
He praises a program initiated in December 1984 with a \$25 million grant to coalitions in 18 cities across the nation. This was a four-year health project awarded by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in association with Pew Memorial Trust

and co-sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. It will provide model health and social programs for homeless persons, servicing more than 50,000 persons a year when in full operation.

The federal government appropriated \$46 million in 1987 for medical programs for the homeless plus more than \$300 million for emergency food and shelter and other services for the homeless, says Dr. Brickner.

*A homeless woman finds refuge in the cavernous waiting room of Grand Central Station in New York City. Below, a man at a church-run shelter for the homeless, also in New York.*

Health care programs are largely unavailable to the homeless.



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The federal government is active, says Robert Nipp, spokesman of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), but federal agencies are restricted by the need to reduce the federal deficit. But because of the new Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, he adds, much is being done.

Passage of legislation is fine, yet budget restrictions nullify much of the federal programs, says the National Coalition. Hager refers to federal shortfalls:

"First, Congress has failed to deliver the full amount promised. While Congress has authorized \$1 billion, but has released far less. In fiscal year 1988 Congress authorized \$616 million, but appropriated only \$363 million.

"Second, the federal government must address the major cause of homelessness, the shortage of affordable housing."

Nevertheless, the federal government funds activity in every state, Puerto Rico, and 327 cities and urban areas, a bigger effort than any other organization puts forth.

Private organizations are trying, but they are only denting the surface of need. The Cambridge, Massachusetts YWCA has set up living quarters for five homeless families. Its goal? To provide a real home for uprooted families to help them escape from the squalor, inconvenience, and indignity of living in a so-called "welfare" hotel.

The District of Columbia is boarding 500 homeless families in welfare hotels and apartments. Court orders demand that the D.C. government provide appropriate shelter for each category of the homeless: families, singles, and

Congress has failed to deliver the full amount promised. In 1988 \$616 million was authorized, but only \$363 million was appropriated

Private organizations only dent the surface of need.

the mentally disturbed. People are housed in gymnasiums, motels, community centers, even in the locker rooms of Robert F. Kennedy Stadium. But the needs go on. And so do the protests. And the Mayor's Homeless Coordinating Council headed by developer Oliver Carr, Jr. scours the city for "decent" quarters.

The state of Massachusetts operates on the premise that housing is a real solution. It offers nearly \$1 billion in three housing bonds to create real homes, not shelter, for the homeless.

Churches support the homeless in varied ways. The Interfaith Assembly on Housing and Homelessness of Boston, a coalition of churches, synagogues, and mosques, operates an interreligious program to aid the homeless. It was launched June 14, 1987 at St. Andrew's United Methodist

Church with an \$18,000 grant from The Boston Foundation.

Churches also provide living quarters, food, Bible reading, and dignity for the homeless.

Mitch Snyder, activist with the Community for Creative Non-Violence, advocate of livable shelter for the homeless, wins battle after battle with the federal government to keep and maintain shelters for the homeless in Washington, DC. He will fast, sit in, march, demonstrate, do whatever is necessary to win a battle on behalf of the homeless.

Chris Sprowal heads a union for the homeless and drives his camper wherever he feels needed. Sprowal, who founded the Committee on Dignity and Fairness for the Homeless in Philadelphia, wonders why homeless people cannot find decent shelter. And he protests and protests.

The plague of Homelessness is a complex, difficult problem that defies simple solutions. It must be attacked through cooperation among governments at all levels, through the tireless contributions of the private sector, non-profit agencies and the churches. But most of all, a reorientation of our thinking may be the most crucial element. Until as a society we recognize that "the homeless" are in fact real persons with real human problems that need addressing, the homeless will likely languish in a vacuum, a kind of public-policy netherworld with no dignity as human beings. Good wishes and hope are not enough. Only action and fresh, creative thinking can bring genuine change. □

*Luix Virgil Overbea is a staff writer for The Christian Science Monitor.* □

Feeding the Pentagon:

# Why America Lost the War on Poverty

By Anthony DiFilippo  
and David Alexander



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Soon after America "rediscovered" poverty in the 1960s the nation faced a major dilemma. The nation entered the Vietnam War at the same time that it tried to meet its moral obligation to fight poverty at home. Relying on the popular belief that America was the wealthiest country on earth, government attempted to resolve this dilemma by propagating the idea that the nation could have both "guns and butter."

With all of America's wealth, it was claimed, the country could fight both a foreign and domestic war at the same time. But while the nation spent \$105.5 billion on the Vietnam War, it devoted less than \$10 billion to the War on Poverty.

By the early 1970s it became evident that the wealthiest nation on earth was experiencing economic insolvency. The guns and butter solution proved to be impractical, since the government spent more money than it collected in taxes. The government responded by partially reneging on its commitment to fight poverty in order to sustain an exorbitant peacetime military budget. By the early 1980s a new Reagan administration reasoned that the nation could no longer afford both guns and butter. Thus, at the expense of the poor and underprivileged, government has greatly enlarged the military budget in recent years.

When the nation rediscovered poverty in the 1960s there were 40 million people (almost 25 percent of the population) who lived in this condition. The poverty rate fell to about 11 percent in 1973 and in 1981 it jumped up to 14 percent. By 1983 over 35 million individuals lived in poverty, more than at any time since 1964. Though improving moderately in recent years, still nearly 14 percent of the population in 1986 lived in poverty, according to the official account by the Bureau of Census. Moreover, homelessness, which began to grow at the end of the 1970s has become widely recognized as a very serious problem.

Coinciding with the recent increases in poverty and homelessness have been two major recessions in the early 1980s and reductions in social service expenditures. Cuts in aid to families with dependent children and reductions in federal housing programs, for example, have worsened the living conditions of un-

derprivileged Americans. These cuts in social welfare have helped to pay for the phenomenal growth of the military budget.

The Pentagon's budget grew from \$117 billion in 1979 to over \$280 billion in 1987—a conservatively estimated 28.1 percent of the total federal budget. In 1984 America's defense expenditures exceeded the gross national product (GNP) of all but nine foreign countries; in that year the U.S. military budget was about the same as Poland's GNP. U.S. military spending in 1984 exceeded the central government expenditures of every nation in the world, except Japan, France and the Soviet Union. After making adjustments for inflation, military expenditures in 1987 were actually higher than they were in 1969 during the Vietnam War.

## The huge U.S. military economy is rapidly undermining our nation's productive competence.

The current state of the economy is not just that it cannot produce both guns and butter. Rather, producing guns the way we do makes us less and less able to produce important civilian goods. The huge U.S. military economy is rapidly undermining the remarkable productive competence we achieved between 1870 and 1970. Not only in ordinary goods such as clothing and steel, but even in important high technology goods such as consumer electronics, computer chips, precision machines and robots, the U.S. has slipped behind other countries.

The result has been to retard the growth of the economy. Moreover, diverting excessive resources to the military has let our basic public works, such as roads, bridges, schools, water and sewage systems and other public structures crumble, and ultimately it has created poverty.

While there are many connections between high levels of military production and poverty, we consider three most important. First, whatever military production contributes to our security, it does little for the economy. Weapons and bases satisfy neither ordinary consumption needs nor those of civilian industry for productive materials and equipment. Producing arms, moreover, drains the ability of both the private economy and the government to replenish and improve the human skills and physical resources necessary for a healthy economy. In particular, a technologically sophisticated economy requires high and advancing levels of human knowledge and skills. But for sizable segments of our population, educational attainment is decreasing, as the decline in such a basic skill as literacy attests to. This not only damages the economy but also makes millions of Americans unemployable in a high-tech economy. By handcuffing our government's ability to budget for these economic needs, the military economy denies opportunities to millions of Americans and virtually condemns them to poverty.

A special characteristic of the military economy makes this drain on government funds even larger than it might otherwise be. Military contractors have little incentive to hold costs down, the way civilian firms do. In fact, profits are usually guaranteed as a percentage of costs, so military contractors have an incentive to push their costs up. This increases the drain on vital human resource programs.

Technology is the second connection between military spending and poverty. Military producers supply not just guns, bullets and uniforms but, increasingly, they provide advanced technology goods, like high-performance electronics, aerospace and nuclear products. So the military uses more than half of the nation's research and development expenditures, and defense industries employ a large number of scientists and engineers. Meanwhile, civilian industry has fallen behind other nations in its ability to produce very basic consumer and industrial goods. This is especially because military industry has diverted engineering skills and research from the civilian sector. While other countries, notably Japan and West

Germany, do not worry about a technical drain to their military, and actually have strong programs to build up civilian technology, the U.S. is becoming technologically second rate.

Military diversion of technology would not be so serious if defense advances in technology were significantly transferable to the civilian sector. While some transfer of technological talent and discoveries do occur, our civilian industries would not be so endangered if the technology transfers (spinoffs) were anywhere near the enormous scale of weapons research and development.

The reasons for this low-level transfer are not difficult to discover. To paraphrase an old adage, the fruits of military research never fall far from the tree. After all, civilian manufacturers have little use for technologies that enable airplanes or submarines to defy detection. Indeed, expensive new Star Wars research will offer even fewer benefits to civilian life. For example, what use would there be for an electromagnetic rail gun or for an X-ray laser powered by a nuclear explosion. No Star Wars spinoff yet imagined justifies its exorbitant cost.

We have seen the impact of our technological slippage in civilian industry for some time now. Because our civilian technology is slowing down, the economy has suffered. With slower growth the economy cannot provide enough good jobs for our growing work force. Moreover, we have exported many jobs to other countries that have undergone vigorous technological advancement. They are now producing many consumer goods and industrial equipment that Americans once manufactured—from televisions and electronics goods to ships and machines. Slow growth of jobs, especially good ones, and job exports have been a major cause of the high poverty levels of the 1980s. While military production is not the only cause of this, it is an important one.

Defenders of the military budget often respond that defense production has helped to stave off poverty by providing high-paying jobs, not only for scientists and engineers, but also for production workers, clerical workers and Pentagon managers. Exports of military products abroad, they add, help keep down our trade deficit.

While the U.S. economy and millions of Americans have become dependent on military production jobs, this is not economically sound. Military-generated jobs are not uniformly available across the country; some states have far more than others. Arms-producing jobs also tend to be unstable because defense contracts come to an end and have to be sought anew. The military trade surplus, moreover, is relatively small—less than six percent of our civilian trade deficit (total trade deficit in 1985 was \$157.5 billion). In the longer run, we have fewer jobs and a larger deficit because of military production.

We also want to emphasize that a continuation of the huge military economy is a matter of public policy. Over a period of two or three years could redirect policy toward rebuilding our basic public works and supply millions of new jobs for a decade or more. At only a

## Slow growth of jobs, especially good ones, and job exports have been a major cause of the high poverty levels of the 1980s.

fraction of the current military budget, we could devote resources to training and retraining the poor and unemployed.

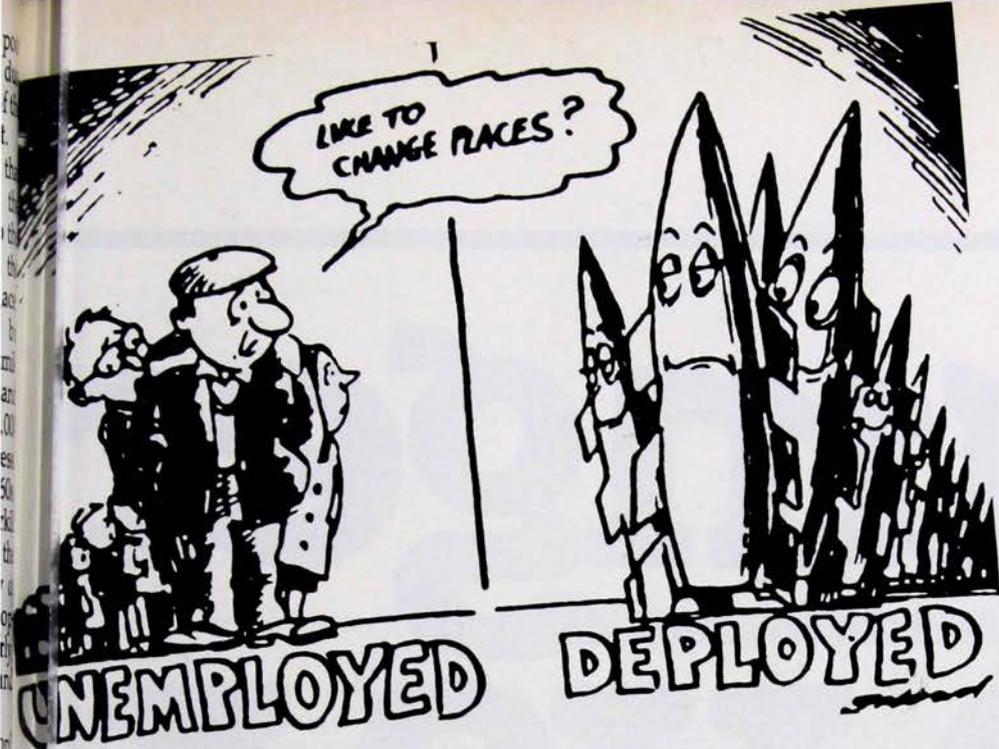
The third way the military affects poverty is during a time of serious budget deficit. During such a difficult time powerful political forces act to "maintain our commitments abroad" and to "keep America strong." They put budget-reducing pressure on social welfare programs which support people in poverty—child support programs, health programs, nutrition programs and housing programs. Not only do supporters of excessive military budgets threaten poverty programs, but aggressive political rhetoric demeans and isolates the poor by implying that they are responsible for their plight. In

several respects, then, the poor face social disempowerment during budget squeezes because of the burden of the military budget.

While most Americans think that some defense is necessary, the nation devotes far too much to the military and far too little to the issue of poverty. In the first place, national security cannot be achieved when more than 32 million Americans live in poverty and when somewhere between 300,000 to 3 million people are homeless. Also, since at least the early 1960s, the U.S. has had enormous overkill capability. This means that the military has had the capability of destroying most of the Soviet population many times over. Clearly, once would be devastating and sufficient enough.

Why did this overkill develop? There are powerful forces within government who have consistently promoted the doctrine of military superiority, despite all costs. Supporting these forces are private corporations who have found working with the Department of Defense much more profitable than doing comparable commercial work since they have to invest much less of their own money. The Center for Defense Information, an organization which includes many retired top-level military officers, recently concluded that weapons are frequently bought by the Pentagon "primarily for the benefit of major military contractors, not for the defense of the United States." Relying on cooperating universities who receive Department of Defense research and development contracts/awards, including Star Wars research grants, defense contractors push for unnecessary and sophisticated new weapons systems.

Currently a major military-industrial promotion along these lines is found in the Stars Wars program, now the largest research effort in the nation. The stated purpose of Star Wars is to develop, literally, a defensive shield to eliminate the threat of nuclear war, though most scientists see this program as fanciful. Placing the continued existence of life on earth in the hands of supercomputers, for example, puts the nation in a very precarious situation. There is no way of determining how such mechanisms will respond to unexpected and unfamiliar events during combat. Neither the computers



**GUNS or BUTTER: Some Facts on the American Economy**

Increase in Military Prime Contracts, 1979 to 1986: +124%	Increase in the Number of Poor Americans, 1979 to 1986: +24%
1985 Defense Spending Per American Living in Poverty: \$7,636	1985 Federal Spending Per American Living in Poverty for: a) Housing Programs \$309 b) Aid to Families with Dependent Children \$271 Total \$580
Percent Change in Star Wars Expenditures: 1984-1985 +2,691% 1985-1986 +89%	Percent Change in Federal Expenditures for Jobs and Training Programs, 1984-1985 -26%
Spending on Defense and Related Research and Development Per Each American Living in Poverty, Ages 16-21 in 1985: \$10,348	Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants Per American Living in Poverty Ages 16-21 in 1985: \$99

Feeding the Pentagon: Why America Lost the War on Poverty/Anthony DiFilippo

nor the software on which they rely can really be tested—except in actual combat when in all probability there will be problems, any one of which could be devastating to human existence. While \$6.7 billion have already been spent on Star Wars, the nation will not become any more secure from this program. On the contrary, this program will only exacerbate the arms race.

Planning for economic conversion from military to civilian production is both morally and economically necessary. Conversion planning would prepare our economy to produce more useful goods and services, some of which are utterly vital for our economic health. A bill submitted to Congress (H.R. 813) by Representative Weiss (D. N.Y.) proposes that conversion plans be drawn up by every major defense contractor. Having viable conversion plans would free local communities and their elected representatives from being held hostage to military production jobs. Freed from the politics of protecting military jobs, government officials can seriously turn their attention to eliminating poverty.

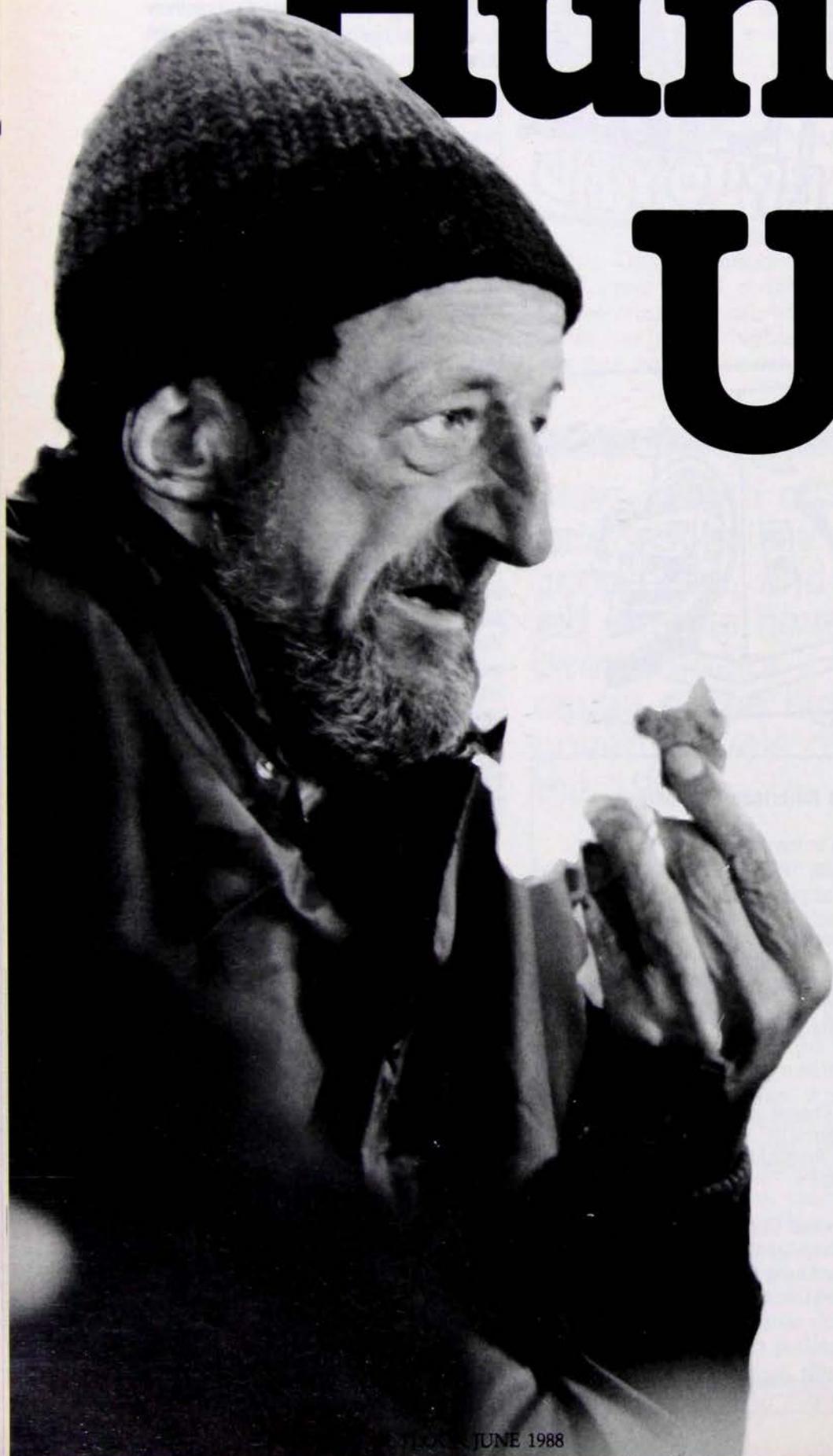
In sum, to give adequate relief to the poor we need to start converting the military economy to a contributing part of the civilian economy. □

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# Hunger USA



By Arthur Simon

Hunger in America—so what's new? There are, in fact, significant new trends in this country:

1. Hunger has increased substantially in the last 10 years.
2. A growing proportion of women, children and working poor people go hungry.
3. Hunger is increasingly accompanied by homelessness.

Let's take a closer look at these trends.

1. *Hunger has been increasing.* Hunger follows in the wake of poverty and the number of people below the poverty line in this country jumped from 24.7 million in 1977 to 32.4 million in 1986. The Harvard-based Physician Task Force on Hunger estimated in 1985 that 20 million people in the United States are hungry for at least two days each month.

Not only are the poor increasing in numbers, but they have been getting poorer, as well.

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The difference between the total income of all U.S. poor people and what that income would have been if they were all living at the poverty line increased by more than 50 percent, from \$32.1 billion to \$49.2 billion, between 1977 and 1986. (The 1977 figure is adjusted upward for inflation, so it reflects the 1986 dollar value.)

The proportion of poor people with incomes below half of the poverty line increased to 39 percent by 1986. This means that the average income for poor people falls far below the poverty line.

Not surprisingly, the number of people seeking emergency food assistance through local food pantries and soup kitchens has risen dramatically during the 1980s, and the upward trend continues.

Why have hunger and poverty increased?

One reason is that income and wages have fallen for poor people. For example, although the employment figures have been improving for several years, many of the new jobs pay low wages.

Another reason is that the government has made sharp cuts in programs to assist poor people. Between 1982 and 1985 several hundred thousand people were dropped from the food stamp program, and almost all food stamp recipients had their benefits reduced. As a result of these program cuts, only one out of nine poor families is currently lifted above the poverty line by assistance programs. In 1979 those programs lifted one of five poor families above that line.

2. *More children are hungry.* Of the 20 million hungry people in the United States, 12 million are children. Hungry children live in poor families. One out of every five

**Working people are the fastest growing group among the poor. In 1979, 6.5 million working people fell below the poverty line. By 1986 the number was 8.9 million.**

children currently lives below the poverty line. The average income for the poorest 20 percent of U.S. families with children declined by 34 percent from 1973 to 1984. During the same period the percentage of poor children who received welfare assistance dropped substantially. The result: more hungry children.

3. *More women are hungry.* Approximately five million more women than men live below the poverty line. And most of the families with children below the poverty line are headed by women. As the number of families headed by women has increased, hunger and poverty has increased among women.

4. *More working people are hungry.* Working people are the fastest growing group among the poor. In 1979, 6.5 million working people fell below the poverty line. By 1986 the number was 8.9 million. This reflects low-wage jobs, including the fact that the minimum wage of

\$3.35 per hour has not changed since January 1981. The purchasing power of that wage today is only two-thirds of what it was then.

5. *Fewer elderly people are hungry.* This is the one bright spot. Once the elderly were the poorest group of U.S. Americans. Now the percentage of elderly persons who are poor is slightly lower than the poverty rate for the U.S. population as a whole.

6. *Hunger today is increasingly accompanied by homelessness.* As poverty has increased and housing became more expensive, homelessness, as well as hunger, has increased. Over the past several years the group showing the biggest increase in homelessness is families. Families with children now represent about 28 percent of the homeless population.

Unfortunately some old features of hunger are still in place. Hunger takes a disproportionate toll among Blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans. More than two-thirds of the nation's poor—69 percent—are white. However, the poverty rate for Blacks was 31 percent and for Hispanics 27 percent in 1986—compared to 11 percent for whites. Among Black children the poverty rate was 43 percent, 37 percent for Hispanic children—both figures up from the late 1970s.

One of the most disturbing trends within this picture is the growing isolation of many poor people. The number of black poor people living in predominantly poor neighborhoods has increased, along with their sense of alienation.

What are we to conclude from these mostly dismal developments? How shall we respond? Let me offer a few thoughts:

## A national problem that requires no less than a national commitment.

1. I think we need to put those trends alongside of the fact that U.S. defense spending soared from \$131 billion in 1980 to \$277 billion in 1988, almost a doubling even after you discount inflation. Add the fact that tax cuts in the 1980s have greatly enriched the rich. The incomes of the poorest 20 percent of the population have dropped, while incomes of the richest 20 percent have risen. By 1986 the gap between those two groups was greater than at any time since the end of WW II, when we started keeping records—not the sign of a healthy nation.

2. Private aid to hungry people is an urgently needed stop-gap measure, but no permanent solution. To assist through soup kitchens and food pantries is beautiful, often heroic, always essential. But it is also dangerous. It is dangerous because we may feel good about having helped—and never ask *why* people are coming to the soup kitchen. Why are they compelled to beg for food? Why are many unemployed? To ask why is to be driven to the causes of hunger, and that, in turn, drives us to the crucial role of national policies that affect hunger.

3. Hunger is a national problem that requires a national commitment. We need to respect differing viewpoints regarding the best balance between private assistance and government action, but without an aggressive government role, hunger is almost certain to get worse. After all, decisions to increase defense spending by \$141 billion a year, to give massive tax breaks to the wealthy, and to cut programs assisting the poor *did* involve aggressive government action in the opposite direction. Perhaps that should be reversed.

*A church grocery-giveaway for the needy in Michigan. Food pantries are one means that churches have for easing the pain of being hungry and poor in America today.*

4. The main need, in my opinion, is not for more adequate food assistance and other forms of emergency help—though they are sorely needed. The primary solution to hunger should be sought through self-help opportunities. That means jobs. It also means training programs, education and other opportunities that lead to jobs. Could we not, by the year 2000, see to it that those who can and should work have jobs and that others (children, disabled, the elderly, etc.) are protected by a safety net—and that in combination this would lift virtually everyone above the poverty line?

That would cost a great deal, to be sure. But it will cost even more, I believe, not to do it. If we do not move in this direction we will pay for it in crime, poor health, drug abuse, teen pregnancies, broken homes, lower production and a host of other ways. Yes, we can save money by not doing it—the same way we can save money by not fixing a leaky roof. The savings are very expensive.

I think there is a hidden, underlying decision that we must make: Shall we think of poor people as objects of pity, scorn, or as truly human? Are we going to treat them—most of them children—as castoffs or as resources with enormous potential, if we will invest in them? Our answers to those questions may well determine the future of the nation and the judgment of God upon us. □

*Arthur Simon is president of Bread for the World, Washington, D.C.*



The primary solution to hunger should be sought through self-help opportunities.





# Dark Shadows Across the Heartland

By David L. Ostendorf

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Midst the green and golden fields, the towns and rural neighborhoods of the American breadbasket, conditions of acute or widespread poverty are unexpected. These are the prairies, plains and people said to "feed the world," the farmers, workers and small businesses constituting the backbone of a supposedly vibrant and expanding U.S. economy. In this lush region, the nation's corn, wheat, soybeans, hogs and cattle are raised in abundance, and the solid values associated with hard work, self-sufficiency and mutual support are said to be rooted in the generations.

There have always been pockets of poverty here, mostly out-of-sight and out-of-mind, and seemingly immune to public or private attempts to eliminate them. Traditionally, rural communities tended to "take care of their own," provided minimal county welfare, or simply tolerated or accepted those who were less well off than others who worked and struggled to eke out a living. But as a strong and predominant middle class emerged out of the booming post-war decades, the remaining rural poor became more isolated from the economic mainstream that most of their neighbors had joined.

The acute and enduring problems of racial and ethnic minorities in the region had earlier been relegated to the reservations and small-town enclaves that bound them from scrutiny, concern or resolution. Thus, rural poverty was not typically associated with the Midwest, but rather with the historically devastating and overwhelming conditions of poverty and race among the people of Appalachia and the South, as well as among migrant workers.

The '80s have changed all that. The worst economic crisis in American agriculture since the 1930s hit the region hard and left indelible marks. Low farm prices, high interest rates and heavy debt took an extraordinary toll on farm families and led by mid-decade to a social and economic crisis that spread across the countryside and into its towns and cities. Policies of the Reagan Administration and the Congress dealt increasingly harsh blows to farm and rural people and communities, and not even the most expensive farm program in history (1986) was able to bring lasting return to prosperity.

## Low farm prices, high interest rates and heavy debt loads have taken an extraordinary toll on America's farm families.

Farmers themselves felt the impacts early in the decade. In 1983—only two years into the crisis—the median family income for all farm families was only three-fourths that of non-farm families, and the farm resident poverty rate of 24 percent far exceeded the rate of 15 percent found for non-farm residents.

By December of 1985, the farm economy in some counties of southwest Iowa had deteriorated to the point that farmers protested their plight by signing up for food stamps. Gathering at state offices in three different communities, 172 farmers applied for food stamps. To the shock of state officials,

media, and farmers themselves, 90 actually qualified. Other food stamp sign-up drives were jointly organized by farm groups and church agencies in 1986 and 1987 to provide families support in their efforts to secure assistance. By the spring of 1986, the number of farm families on food stamps in Iowa soared to 2,000 from an estimated 400 in mid-1984, and included a wide range of older farmers and young families, and small- and medium-sized farm operators.

Farmers do not want to be on food stamps, and for most non-farmers it is difficult to fathom a food producer in need of food assistance. But cash shortages due to low farm income and often the absolute need to use available cash to make farm payments in a timely manner made it difficult for many farm families to purchase basic food. Livestock was usually secured as collateral by lenders and unavailable for personal consumption. Gardens certainly provided some needs. But many families faced not only full-time farming, but full-time off-farm jobs, and the hours to assure their own food self-sufficiency were difficult to find.

Still, the absence of outreach programs, the isolation of food stamp offices and the stigma attached by many farm, rural and church people to receiving food stamps or other forms of public assistance is strong enough to prevent families from seeking such help. And as one Kansas farm leader and activist who has helped countless farm families said, a lot of rural people in the Midwest still believe that it is "immoral" to be poor.

Widespread poverty conditions throughout the nation's breadbasket were documented by the Physician Task Force on Hunger in America in 1986. Defining a "hunger county" as one in which more than 20 percent of the population lives below the poverty level and fewer than 33 percent of the eligible poor receive food stamps, the Task Force found a surprisingly large number of such counties in the Midwest-Plains region.

Noting that in 1973 hunger counties were centered primarily in the South and Southwest, the 1986 study located 90 of the 150 designated counties in the heartland. Although Texas has the greatest proportion of the nation's



150 poverty counties, it is followed closely by South Dakota with 28 and Missouri with 17. Additionally, 10 counties were found in Nebraska, 5 in Minnesota, 12 in North Dakota and 2 in Iowa. To the unconscionable devastation of native Americans on the reservations had been added the decimation of a predominantly white rural middle class.

The "new" hunger and poverty in the breadbasket was not isolated at the farm gate. The ripple effects of the deteriorating farm and rural economy stretched across the region, reached into its cities and factories, and deeply affected and altered its social and economic fabric. The breadth of these conditions across the nation and region is staggering. For example:

—Unemployment in non-metropolitan counties of the U.S. has risen dramatically since 1979. That year, of the 2,400 non-metro counties only 300 had unemployment rates higher than 9 percent. By 1985 that number of non-metro counties had risen to 1,200, nearly half the total.

—A report by Public Voice for Food and Health Policy this year found that for the first time in several decades, the 1986 rate of poverty in the nation's rural areas surpassed that in the country's largest cities. The 18.1 percent rural poverty was nearly 50 percent above the rate in the nation's metropolitan areas.

—A 1987 study by the Wisconsin-based Institute for Research on Poverty found that the number of Iowans living on subsistence income doubled between 1979 and 1985. By 1985, Iowa's poverty rate soared to 18 percent, higher than any other northern state.

—A 1988 University of Iowa report revealed that from 1979 to 1986, Iowa experienced a net decline of 84,000 workers (-22 percent) making \$20,000 a year or more in the goods-producing part of its economy. Simultaneously, net employment gains in the service sector stood at 37,000 jobs yielding annual earnings of \$11,500.

—The same report indicated that 33 of the state's 99 counties had poverty levels of 20 percent or greater in 1985, and that in 1984, Iowa's 20 smallest counties—with only 6.2 percent of the total population—had almost 24 percent of the entire poverty population in the

state.

But beyond all the numbers and analyses lies the pain and suffering of people: families who have lost their homes and farms; workers who have lost jobs; children and parents forced to go without dental or health care; people going hungry. And beyond the present level of human suffering lie signs of disturbing trends inherent in chronic, long-term social dislocation and economic stratification taking place in rural America.

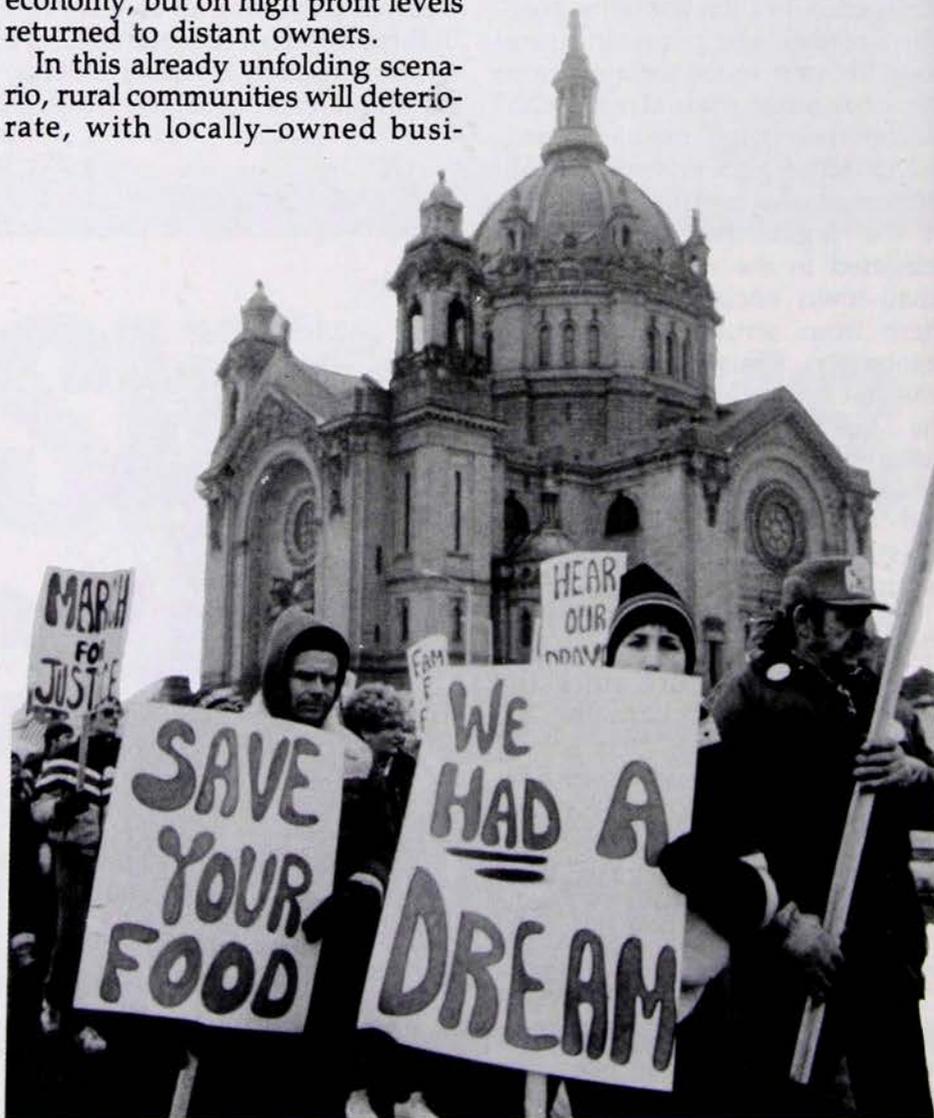
For example, more farm families will certainly be forced to leave the land unless federal farm policies are reformed to enable farmers to get a fair price for their commodities. The Congressional Office of Technology Assessment predicted in 1986 that by the year 2000, one million of the nation's 2.1 million farms would go out of business, given continuation of present policies. The land itself would be controlled by fewer people; and in those states without adequate protection against large-scale farming, control would be by outside interests intent not on building the rural economy, but on high profit levels returned to distant owners.

In this already unfolding scenario, rural communities will deteriorate, with locally-owned busi-

nesses struggling for survival against regional retail centers. An eroded tax base will force town and county governments to scale down and confront their inability to provide basic community services. Rural schools will face the relentless pressure of consolidation to provide quality education to a declining population of young people. Roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure needs will be increasingly difficult to maintain.

Meanwhile, new economic development opportunities will roll into the countryside with minimum wage jobs carrying few, if any, benefits for a people pressed to "take anything" simply to survive. In the midst of all these pressures the rural poor will—as in times past and as among racial and ethnic minorities—simply have to find their own way.

It is a grim, but highly realistic scenario given the current commitment of the public and private sectors to confront fundamentally the social and economic problems inherent in the unbalanced distribution of wealth and power in late



Minnesota farmers demonstrate for a moratorium on farm foreclosures.

20th century America. It is also a scenario that will be increasingly difficult to counter in a heartland where the lines between the "haves, the have-less, and have-nots" grow increasingly harder and more pronounced. In the breadbasket as in the city centers we see the emergence of a two-tier society. The rural poor and new-poor are squeezed steadily to the fringe as the middle class struggles to maintain itself and avoid the downward slide. Meanwhile, economic and political power percolates to the top and the structural conditions of poverty and powerlessness become hardened, commonplace and widely-accepted.

Into the midst of these conditions the rural church especially is called to provide creative and bold leadership rooted in a biblical vision of justice and community among the people of the land.

Poverty in the heartland is a grim and growing reality, as it is all across this nation. The rural crisis of the 1980s has prompted the church to implement new programmatic responses to meet immediate human needs and to take a more active and activist role in charting public policy and institutions wielding control over the lives of people. Its people have generously given hundreds of thousands of dollars to help rural neighbors in need of food, health and household support.

The church's prophetic voice has been heard from the gates of foreclosed farms to the halls of state legislatures and Congress. It has strongly supported grass roots organizing with farm and rural people, and has been a key player in state and national coalitions with farm, labor and community organizations committed to challenging and changing the root causes of poverty and dislocation. It has joined in numerous efforts to change institutions and public policies that have adversely affected the lives of the rural poor and middle class, and has helped develop and pass new public policies that have enabled rural people to maintain their base on the land and in communities until economic stability and democratic opportunity can be secured.

The challenges before the American church will not be easy to confront, especially in a society that constantly pulls in opposite directions at its people, values,

resources and commitments.

In a nation split between rich and poor, we are called to stand with the poor.

In a nation dominated by urban power centers and power brokers, we are compelled to side with the powerless and the isolated both on distant landscapes and in close-by cityscapes.

In a country enamored of its own progress, wealth and technology, we must ask the price to the powerless and the poor.

In a society less committed to paying for assistance to its needy people through government programs, we must challenge spending priorities.

In a radically polarized society, the church must live out its preferential option for the poor by anchoring its work to the leadership of historically oppressed minorities in its own midst.

In an America that would prefer to totally isolate and ignore its poor, and overlook entirely the rural poor struggling for survival in the midst of both affluence and decline, the church must speak the prophetic word of warning and live the prophetic word of justice. To do any less is to perpetuate the historical conditions of inequality that have created intolerable poverty throughout the global community, and that have been a scandal to our faith. □

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*An Oconee, Illinois farmer watches in poignant silence as an auctioneer sells off equipment on the farm he has owned since the early 1960s. Farm auctions have become an all-too-familiar spectacle throughout America's heartland. Below, an artist's rendering of an auction.*



# The Suffering of Children

By Millie Hawk Daniel

There is something tragically numbing about statistics, especially when they involve children. For example, when we read that one in five American children is poor, it's easy to skip ahead to the next article, comfortable in the knowledge that no one we know personally is suffering. The facts about children and poverty are in print so often, previewed on television, discussed in church and synagogue so regularly that their existence has become part of the background against which we live. Like pollution, late trains, and crime, we fear that there is little to be done about it, so it is pushed to the back of the mind.

In 1985 more than 5 million children lived in families with incomes less than half the subsistence level defined by the federal government. Poverty for these children is an inescapable fact. For them, the reality of a nation failing to provide for all of its young is painfully and pitifully real.

"They are apprehensive, realizing there are problems," Lucille T. Cullen said of the poor children she sees in her work as executive director of the Traveller's Aid Society of Tampa, in Florida. She described children coming into her

office with a parent—"Usually it's the mother who comes in to talk," she said. "If the children get even a hint that there's a solution to their problems, they sense it and look relieved."

## The Effects of Poverty

Poverty affects children in many ways—physically, spiritually and emotionally. Physically poor children are more likely to be sickly at birth because of inadequate or no prenatal care given to the mother. They are more likely to have physical deformities and to display the mental deficiencies caused by lack of a proper diet. Poor kids are in trouble more often, more likely to perform badly on tests, and to eventually drop out of school. As they grow older, they are less employable, more susceptible to drug and alcohol abuse, more likely to land in jail, and to have children who repeat this cycle.

Poverty's spiritual and emotional effects are the sapping of a child's self-esteem. "They get lost in the shuffle, and their hope is bleak," says the Rev. Austin Armitstead, one of three pastors at the Community United Methodist Church in Jackson Heights, New York. Educators and child develop-

ment specialists repeatedly stress the importance of self-esteem to a child's ability to learn. Yet the absence of so many basic necessities of life—food, proper clothing, shelter—make the fostering of self-esteem in poor children difficult. The resulting learning problems can undermine a poor child's chances of benefiting from an education that could forge a pathway out of poverty.

## Poverty and Education

Poverty does correlate closely with school failure, especially where family structure has broken down. Poor students are three times more likely to become dropouts than students from more economically advantaged homes. Children of the poor suffer more frequently from almost every form of childhood deficiency, including infant mortality, gross malnutrition, recurrent and untreated health problems, psychological and physical stress, child abuse, and learning disabilities." Says Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Washington (DC)-based Children's Defense Fund: "If current trends continue, a disproportionate number of our young will grow up poor, uneducated, and untrained

The painful reality is that our nation is failing badly to provide for its young.

at the very time that our society will need all of our young to be healthy, educated and productive."

#### **Caring for Poor Children**

Theologians, humanists, and others often invoke a common humanity as a reason why poor people, especially children, should be an important concern to everyone. The Rev. Armitstead, for example, reminds people that poverty could strike us at any time. He admonishes listeners to remember that "there but for the grace of God go I." We have a moral responsibility, he says, "to help children feel good about themselves, to try to instill in each child a sense that she or he is important in her or his own right."

Many people, however, need other arguments to convince them that they have a vested interest in what happens to poor children. "Tax issues, welfare, subsidies, cost benefit analyses—these are the only things that will move some people," said Norma Rollins. As executive director of Advocates for Children, Inc., a not-for-profit private organization that is concerned with denials of equal opportunity to disadvantaged children in New York City public schools,



When we make an effort to eliminate poverty in the life of just one child, we make all our lives a little better.

Rollins confronts the needs of poor children. While Advocates for Children sets no minimum income threshold in order for parents to qualify for assistance from the organization, the fact is, says Rollins, that many of the people who need help in interacting with public schools are poor people. "Because New York City schools are perceived as being so bad," she said, "anyone who can afford it puts their kids in private or parochial schools. What's left in the public schools are often the poorest kids." These children come from homes where they are being raised by a single parent, usually the mother, who is on welfare or working at a low-paying job. The kids come to school with no preschool experience, and frequently end up in classrooms with less experienced teachers or permanent substitutes because more experienced teachers have transferred to better schools. The host of problems that follow poor kids to school should be an indication that these kids need more, certainly not less, than other students. But the lack of political clout among poor people makes it that much harder for them to get the things they need for themselves and their children.

Therefore, righting the wrongs that poor children experience needs to become an issue that all people will fight for. "It costs \$35,000 a year to keep someone in prison, and \$38,000 a year to keep a family in a welfare hotel in New York City," said Rollins. If we can begin to guarantee a good education for all children, and employment and housing for their families, everybody saves.

A 1985 study by Dr. Henry Levin, cited in a *New York Times* article last year, says "the number

of students from poor and uneducated backgrounds is growing much faster than the population at large." If the crisis is ignored, he said, "the consequences to all Americans will be disastrous, with a deterioration of the labor force resulting in a further decline in American competitiveness, and a loss in sales and profits." The CED report had a similar finding. As poor, uneducated children reach adolescence, the report says, "many will be only marginally literate and virtually unemployable. Poverty and despair will be their constant companions. Too soon in their lives, many will have children of their own, thus perpetuating yet another generation mired in ignorance and want." However, the CED report also cited research from the House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families that maintained that just \$1 invested in quality preschool education would return nearly five times that much because of lower costs of special education, public assistance, and fighting crime. The report urged policy makers to consider three strategies for improving the prospects of children in need: prevention through early intervention, restructuring the foundations of education, and retention and re-entry programs for potential and actual dropouts.

#### The Impact of Poverty

According to Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY), the U.S. today may be the first society in history where children are much worse off than adults. A 1986 report in *Newsweek* magazine underscored Moynihan's point when it stated that "the downward cycle is accelerating for the youngest Ameri-



cans. An infant born today has nearly a one-in-four chance of starting life in a poor household." Most of these children, noted Ms. Cullen, "will never have the opportunity of love and security. Their parents will be so busy trying to contain themselves that they won't be able to give their children the attention they need." Mr. Armitstead agrees: "Children need to know that there is someone there who knows them as individual persons. They need to know that when they fail, there will be someone there to share that failure with them and encourage them on to the next task."

When children don't get what they need, they sometimes end up feeling "they're not as good as other people," says Letha Catlett. A retired registered nurse and mother of two adult children, Mrs. Catlett has long been active in neighborhood programs that aid homeless and poverty-stricken children. As a member of RSVP, a retired senior citizens volunteer program, she has trained hospital staff, community members, and case workers in working with children who have AIDS and has



*This family in Harlem in New York City gathers in the kitchen during the winter, the only source of heat in their rundown tenement.*

risked arrest in demonstrations demanding day care in New York City. "In a country as rich as ours, to see a child go hungry is devastating," she remarked. In addition to the effects of hunger, homelessness, and scarcity that afflicts so many poor children, Mrs. Catlett added the difficulty of obtaining medical care. "Kids in clinics are often the last to be taken care of because their parents don't have any kind of insurance," she explained.

### **Righting the Wrongs**

Merely chronicling the ways in which poverty hurts children doesn't say much about how to make that hurt go away. Most experts agree that righting the wrong that is poverty will take concerted efforts by a combination of groups, organizations, and individuals. According to Mr. Armitstead, the first order of business is to recognize that the problem stems from "new technologies and exploitive economic practices"; the second is to join forces—schools, churches and others—to tackle the problem. At the Community United Methodist Church, the racially

and economically mixed congregation has operated a child care program at minimal cost to its users for 13 years.

According to Norma Rollins, schools can do much to address the needs of poor children. The physical condition of many school buildings counteracts the notion that learning is important, she says. Creating a more pleasant physical environment might help children feel that an education is important. She also suggests getting better teachers for poorer schools, by offering better salaries. Above all, she explains, that what is needed is a commitment to the belief that "all kids can learn, not just kids who come from a certain background."

Ms. Rollins also thinks that schools can better address children's physical needs. She would abolish income requirements for participation in school breakfast and lunch programs and just feed everybody. "The money that is used administratively in checking eligibility requirements could be better spent in giving children the food they need." She told of a child who was suspended from school for getting in the lunch line twice. "This was the only meal the child could count on." Other children have been reprimanded for stuffing oranges and apples into their pockets to take home to siblings who don't attend school.

Health clinics in schools could help meet the health needs of children whose parents can't afford preventive health care. Some schools have begun to look into cooperative arrangements with local health care facilities—clinics, hospitals, doctor's offices—to meet the health needs of their students. And high schools need to recog-

nize that one way of keeping teenaged girls in school is to provide on-site day care centers. "Parenthood is the major cause of female high school dropouts," Norma Rollins said.

The educational needs of homeless children must become the joint concern of the housing and educational systems. "When homeless children are placed in temporary shelters, then moved around in a few days or months to yet another hotel or shelter, it's impossible to make sure they're educated," says Rollins. These kids end up falling through the cracks.

Letha Catlett often spends time sitting in her window watching neighborhood children. "If you just look around, you can see what's happening to children. When a child is happy, she skips along, noticing things. But when things are hard for a child, you can see it in the child's face."

Not everyone is as caring as Letha Catlett, not everyone will take the time to look and see what's in an unknown child's face. But perhaps those who think they needn't be concerned about the look on a poor child's face will take the time to heed these closing words from Norma Rollins: "Nothing has more impact on the quality of life than poverty."

When we talk about being afraid to walk the streets at night, when we worry about crime, we're talking about the effects of poverty. When we make an effort to eliminate the poverty in the life of just one child, we make the quality of all our lives a little bit better. □

*Milly Hawk Daniel is a freelance writer who writes frequently about children and child development issues. She lives in New York City.*

# Hard Times in the Rust Belt

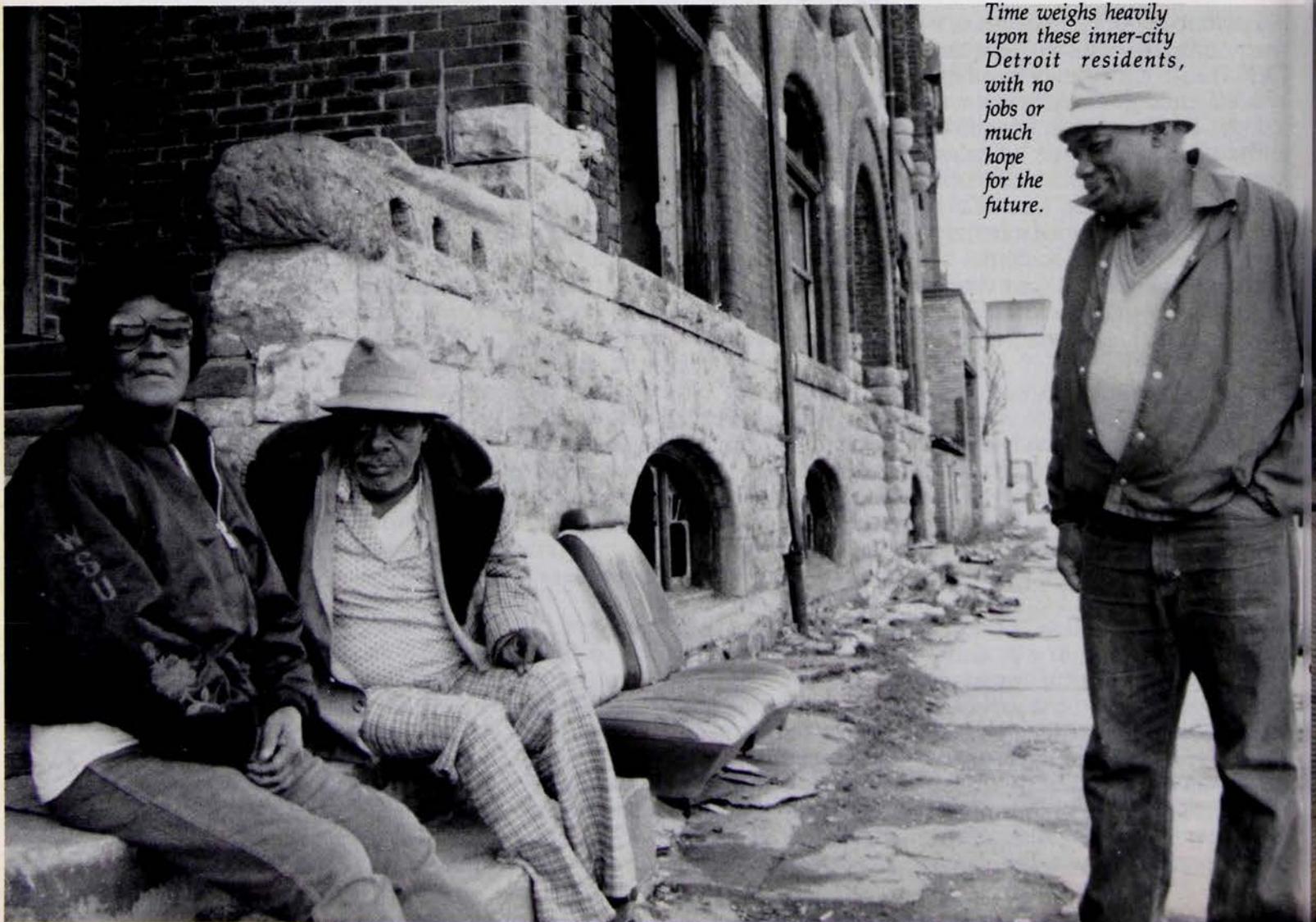
By Herb Boyd

When Detroit sneezes the rest of the nation comes down with pneumonia is an old adage often cited to denote the Motor City's importance to the country's economic health. Well, Detroit is more than sneezing with an unemployment rate that reached 11.7 percent this winter—among the highest in the nation. It is indicative of the spiral-

ing misery index eroding the "rust belt," America's deteriorating industrial heartland.

As a key community in the nation's rust belt—a noncontiguous region that includes such industrial centers as Youngstown, Ohio, Birmingham, Alabama and Camden, New Jersey—Detroit's unemployed, underemployed and

discouraged workers represent the growing multitude who have been laid off from the steel mills, rubber industry, and automobile plants. Displaced by runaway shops (those that have left the city, state or country), foreign competition or automation, these workers are struggling valiantly to keep afloat in a rising sea of poverty.



*Time weighs heavily upon these inner-city Detroit residents, with no jobs or much hope for the future.*

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## Detroit's workers are struggling to stay afloat in a rising sea of poverty and homelessness.

Dennis Waller, 29, is typical of the hundreds crowding a westside Detroit unemployment office. He was laid off almost a year ago from General Motors where he was an assembler. "This is the second time I've been laid off," Waller says, as we stand in a line of 75 people. "They called me back and told me I could expect to work at least five years. I worked 24 weeks—two weeks shy of qualifying for unemployment benefits."

Waller explains that he was among five hundred workers who were laid off, all of them ineligible to receive compensation. "I feel that this was deliberate," he laments. "Why should they deny us what is ours. We paid taxes on what we earned and we should be allowed to get some compensation for the time we've worked." He feels that he was also cheated during his first lay-off when he was told that because he worked at the truck plant he did not qualify for TRA (Trade Readjustment Assistance) or employment lost as a result of foreign competition.

Any mention of GM, he says, leaves a bitter taste in his mouth. "Even if they called me back, and that's unlikely since they are still laying folks off, I wouldn't go back," he swears. "I've put in applications for jobs with the state, county and the city. With or without GM, I'm determined to survive." Separated from his wife and with custody of his son, Waller barely has change for bus fare to look for work; his mother keeps his ten-year-old son for him. Two visits a week to the local blood bank provides the money for food. Unfortunately, he couldn't sell enough blood to stave off the bill collectors who first repossessed his car and then his house.

"When my car was repossessed," Waller explains, "my son watched them take it away. I was so ashamed that I told him it was being stolen. It took me a long time to get over that experience."

Wendy Brown's situation is not as grave as Dennis Waller's. She was laid off only last week from the Renaissance Manufacturing Company which makes small parts for GM. She has no children and her husband is employed. "They gave me my walking papers last Friday," she says, angry about spending the entire morning in lines. "They laid off eleven of us . . . said they were cutting back in production. I had been working there almost a year." Unlike Waller, who is merely in line to get papers to take to a welfare agency, Brown hopes to get compensation in two weeks. "I'm not sure how much they're going to give me, but it's better than nothing."

Both Waller and Brown complain about the lines, the lack of jobs. "Out in the suburbs the lines are shorter," Brown notes, "When I start getting my checks, I'm going out there to pick them up. I'm not wasting my whole day in this place." The paucity of employment offices in the city is itself a revealing commentary. Five years ago, there were six Michigan Employment Security Offices on the westside of Detroit. Now only two serve the entire city.

The suburbs also attract a large number of job seekers from Detroit. This job boom in the suburbs is the result of the flight of industrial and retail business from the city, a phenomenon that has steadily increased since World War II. According to Joe Darden and Richard Child-Hill, co-authors of *Detroit: Race and Uneven Development*, more

than 187,000 jobs were lost between 1958 and 1982 in retailing, manufacturing, service and wholesale industries. Many of these jobs moved to the suburbs. But because of the deplorable lack of public transportation in certain parts of the suburbs, a car is a necessity for seeking and keeping a job. The flight of jobs to the suburbs, therefore, more than effectively places these jobs out of the reach of the working poor.

Grace Carter, because she had no car and could not afford the exorbitant taxi fares, had to quit her job at MacDonald's. The round-trip taxi ride from her house to the job consumed too large a portion of her meager salary. "After I paid someone to take me back and forth to work or hired a taxi," Carter says, "it just wasn't worth trying to keep the job. Plus, they reduced me from full-time to part-time." For several months Carter, who has a daughter, tried to hang onto the job, but realized she was better off on welfare.

"Working at MacDonald's," she recalls, "I was bringing home about \$90 every two weeks. I get twice that much on welfare and \$80 worth of food stamps, and medicare, too." Rather than continue to struggle as the "working poor," Carter has reluctantly accepted aid, though she says she would gladly take a job making the same amount of money, if one were available. Before getting on the dole, Carter was among the nearly 20 million Americans who work part time, and more than five million of them want full-time jobs. Like Carter, many of these part-time workers face a choice between half a job or no job at all.

And practically no job at all is Leni Sinclair's lot. A nationally



*Detroit residents wait in line to receive their unemployment compensation.*

recognized photographer and layout artist, Sinclair stopped looking for a steady job a long time ago. She doesn't even dream anymore of being gainfully employed. "I haven't had a full-time job since President Carter was in the White House," she laughs. Her day-to-day existence is precariously held together by occasional free-lance assignments and her ability to improvise within the cracks of our depressed economy. A few weeks ago, through a friend, she landed a temporary job doing research for Chrysler Corporation.

"But that's only for three days," she says. "I should make just enough money to pay my phone bill and get a few things for the house. In a month or so," she sighs, "I have to find a new place to live." With both her daughters now over 18, Sinclair is no longer eligible to occupy her government-subsidized, virtually rent-

free apartment. "I may have to look seriously for some form of employment . . . maybe it'll get better now that Reagan is on the way out."

Many depressed workers in the rust belt—when they aren't blaming foreign imports, outsourcing (subcontracting work to another non-union firm either in the U.S. or abroad) and robotics for their inability to find work—point the finger at the Reagan Administration or the federal government. Voices of protest from Peoria to Lackawanna are demanding an increase in the minimum wage, job training, child care and an upgrading of existing benefit programs. Recently, 75 unemployed Flint autoworkers descended on Capitol Hill, seeking legislation that would make the rules governing extended unemployment benefits more liberal. They also requested an increase in the minimum wage from

\$3.35 to \$4.65.

These jobless protestors, and others, are well aware that a massive anti-poverty program requires an increase in taxes and a shift from excessive military to social spending. "We haven't come here to Washington to demonstrate," says one laid-off worker from Flint Local 595, "we've come here to do some politicking and lobbying."

Workers at Morse Cutting Tool in New Bedford, Massachusetts, threatened with a plant closing, marshalled the forces of their union—Local 277 of the United Electrical Workers, and brought the community together to fight and win the struggle to save their plant and the hundreds of jobs it provided. Similar tactics by workers to save their jobs have developed in Van Nuys, California and Youngstown, Ohio. These workers, anticipating plant closings and massive layoffs, are not content to

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## What companies tend to ignore is the enormous costs of plant shutdowns and unemployment.

sit idly by, leaving their fates to companies whose answer to the economic downturn is relocation in another state or abroad.

What the workers are aware of, and what companies tend to ignore, is the enormous social costs of plant shutdowns and unemployment. As in Dennis Waller's case, the loss of employment was subsequently followed by the loss of his car and his home. Waller and other laid-off workers' loss of income has a "ripple" effect that reaches to local stores, restaurants, and banks as well as the tax base on which the entire community depends. More drastically, there are the physical and psychological consequences of unemployment that lead to crime, alcoholism, drugs, suicide, wife and child abuse. In recent years, there has been a steady increase in mental illness, malnutrition and homelessness stemming from long-term unemployment.

In Detroit, the Focus: HOPE program, which was founded in 1968, is effectively combatting a few of the crises of unemployment. Through its Food Prescription Program, this non-profit corporation with federal support, provides a monthly, nutritionally balanced selection of food to more than 40,000 at-risk mothers and children. It provides 7,500 senior citizens with a food supplement and has created one of the largest child care facilities in the nation for poor parents who need child care while they work or pursue job-training programs.

Of greater, long-range significance are Focus: HOPE's Machinist Training Institute that has placed 96 percent of its graduates in the workforce and its High Quality Manufacturing, Inc., whose em-

ployees are recruited directly from the welfare rolls. These workers, mostly women, make engine hoses for Detroit Diesel division of General Motors. Focus: HOPE also has a for-profit division in its large complex. This is Cycle Tech Remanufacturing, where workers tear down faulty transmissions, rebuild them and recycle them back to GM. If Cycle Tech continues to grow—it now has more than 100 hourly employees—it could become the nation's largest minority-owned manufacturer of durable goods.

Another hopeful sign for Detroit's beleaguered unemployed and homeless is COTS (The Coalition on Temporary Shelter). Converted from an old hotel, COTS provides room for 170 people who have no place to live. In a recent month, they provide 3,654 shelter nights for the homeless, which is 113 percent of its capacity. When it is filled to capacity, it has a referral service that directs the homeless to other nearby shelters.

Focus: HOPE and COTS are but two of several programs that are committed to assist Detroit's needy and unemployed. But if the jobless rate continues to increase as it has over the last few months, Detroit's grim employment picture will make a long, hot summer almost inevitable.

If Detroit, and other cities mired in the rust belt, are to break the cycle of despair, the major industries joined by the state, city, federal government, unions and civic groups, will all have to bring their resources to the widespread problem of unemployment; America cannot passively permit continued erosion of its industrial base. The situation is so dire in some regions of "Smokestack" America that nothing short of a

In a measure designed to bring the nation's working poor gradually to at least the poverty level (\$11,600 for a family of four), the Democratic controlled House Labor and Education Committee approved and sent to the floor (March 16) legislation to raise the minimum wage of \$3.35 per hour to \$5.05 over the next four years. Under the bill, the minimum wage would go to \$3.85 an hour next year, \$4.25 in 1990, \$4.65 in 1991 and \$5.05 in 1992. The full House was to take up the legislation on April 11. However, the president is being urged to veto any minimum wage increase that would lead to a decrease in the number of job opportunities. Reagan administration economists believe that raising the minimum wage to \$4.65 an hour would result in the loss of 880,000 jobs or more. But many advocates of the bill contend that raising the minimum wage would have few noticeable adverse effects on business or employment and could stimulate the economy.

domestic Marshall Plan will bring about the fundamental change these communities so desperately need. As the UAW announced a few years ago: "America's economic decline is not inevitable—nor is it irreversible. By choosing the correct direction at this historic crossroads, we can move forward to a more prosperous future. We can rebuild the manufacturing strength of the American economy and improve the fairness of American society . . . The choice is ours to make." □

*Herb Boyd, a free lance writer based in New York, is a former student and resident of Detroit.*

# MIGRANTS

By George Ogle

Migrant farm workers are still the most wretched of workers in our land. One scene from Southern California carries with it strong recollections of John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* and Edward R. Murrow's "Harvest of Shame."

From the recently paved road one looks out on a picture of beauty, even tranquility. To the left, winding its way up the side of a rolling hill is a nursery of various trees and flowers. The shapes and sizes of the trees blend artistically in a harmony of colors. To the right, a housing development is taking shape. Like the nursery, the houses exude elegance, and a price range of about \$200,000.

Where the two hills meet there is a gully that meanders downward to level land covered with reeds

and scrub trees. From the paved road above, the reeds and trees add a touch of unspoiled nature to the pleasing landscape.

However, as one walks down that gully, another world unseen from the road, is revealed. Under those reeds and scrub trees, in near swamp-like conditions caused by runoffs from the two hills, live a hundred people. Their only shelter, besides the trees, is a ragtag collection of shacks made of cardboard, plastic and miscellaneous pieces of wood. Water for drinking, bathing and cooking is furnished by a hose taped into the runoff from the nursery above. The people living here are from Oaxa-

*Migrant worker families toiling in an onion field in the southwest.*

ca, Mexico. They work in the nursery and on ranches in the area. They follow the seasons northward. In the South they might be paid as low as \$2.00 an hour. In the North, it goes up to \$4.50 an hour. More difficult to endure than the low wages and the miserable living conditions, however, is the human isolation and even disdain they suffer from their supervisors on the job and from people they come across when they make their infrequent trips to town. The Oaxacan people are patient folk, with a quiet pride in themselves and their traditions. Being reduced to near peonage in California is a humiliation forced upon them by the poverty of their homeland.

This picture of the Oaxacans is severe. The conditions of most



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migrant workers is not this harsh—even though there are multiple examples of such harshness up and down the East and West Coasts of the United States. Nevertheless, such harsh patterns hold true for all migrant workers: their living conditions are not known to those who live in affluence next door to them; the low pay and near peonage under which they labor draws little attention, even from those of us who “stand up” for workers’ rights; the humiliation that these 500,000 or so people of Mexican, Caribbean and Black American origins suffer each day escapes us. Yet the entire society depends upon them just as do the owners of the nurseries, the ranches and the big houses in California. We eat because of their sweat and the growers gather profits into banks because of their labor.

As though the present situation were not bad enough, in recent years two other things have occurred that are likely to cause the migrants’ low estate to deteriorate even further. First is the dramatic decline in the strength of the United Farm Workers. Cesar Chavez’s union has less than half its membership of ten years ago. Collective agreements with growers are in a steady decline. All the contracts in the California table grape industry have been lost. This weakening of the union is primarily caused by the militant anti-union campaign growers and the pro-grower character of the state’s Agricultural Labor Relations Board. The absence of a union has created a situation where wages and working conditions are said to be reverting to lower levels, and where there is little protection against the misuse of pesticides and arbitrary treatment.

Second, the new immigration bill (Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986) has expanded the program of allowing growers to import large numbers of “contract workers” from foreign countries, usually Mexico and the Caribbean Islands. The program is called the H-2 program. It supplies the employer with a permanently cheap supply of labor for which he/she pays a minimum wage. There is no obligation on the part of the grower to pay social security, pension or unemployment insurance, and if the worker is not docile enough or does not produce enough, like any

**They follow the seasons, enduring low wages and miserable living conditions. ...We eat because of their sweat.**



*Children are often the victims of the migrant labor system. The churches have sought to respond by providing day care and clothing.*

other bad commodity, he can be returned to his home country without obligation. As many as 300,000 of these H-2 workers may be imported in a year.

The beneficiaries of the program are the growers, the American consumers and the middlemen. The losers, of course, are the farm workers—domestic and foreign. In the short run, H-2 workers gain a minimum income, but in the long run, they are frozen into a system of bare-bones wages and poor working conditions. The impact on domestic farm workers is even more devastating. They have to try and compete with “captive labor” (the new immigration bill is unlikely to stop the flow of undocumented workers into the country) that is guaranteed the lowest wage possible, and where workers compete against each other for ever lower levels of income.

Can anything be done about this miserable situation? Yes, quite a bit

can be done. We can work to have the H-2 program eliminated; we can demand that federal and state governments guarantee that all workers, once employed, shall have the right to organize and bargain collectively. This right should be exercised by citizens and non-citizens, domestic and foreign; we can point out the subservience of governments to agro-business and demand “equal time” for workers; and we as churches can be aware of the awkward, often humiliating situations that migrant workers are placed in, and we can go out from our churches to the migrant camps, the gullies and fields and be their friends. We might even learn Spanish. □

*The Rev. George E. Ogle is director, Department of Social and Economic Justice, General Board of Church and Society.*

# Mission Opportunities

## Recruitment/Service

No matter what our professional bent, as Christians, we have a calling to the ministry, and for the building up of the body of Christ. William "Bill" Tubbs, 24, and his colleagues in the General Board of Global Ministries' US-2 program, have answered this calling.

US-2s are national missionaries who work in rural and urban communities throughout the United States, distinguishing themselves as young people who make a difference in the lives of others.

When Mr. Tubbs moved to Biloxi, Mississippi, a year and a half ago, he carved out a niche for himself. He started an adult functional literacy program to serve "construction workers, parents, people who don't work" and anyone else who never learned to read but wanted to.

Tubbs's literacy program is one of several outreach projects of Moore Community House, which currently provides individual tutoring for 53 non-readers. The center is located in Back Bay, one of the poorest communities in the Harrison County, Mississippi area.

"There is no steady industry in Biloxi year round," says Bill Tubbs, a graduate of Birmingham-Southern College. "A lot of the work is seasonal—with the seafood industry—and service oriented." The area's economy is tied to several nearby military bases, and to the tourism industry.

The county has a 33 percent high school drop-out rate.

Ms. Nancy Martin, executive director of Moore House, outlines some reasons why: "Some, maybe, are not inspired to finish (school). Some may feel they have to work. They may be caught in a cycle of failure. They may not get the support they need at home, or the diet they need. They may be in crowded conditions."

The cycle of failure is being reversed as the literacy students achieve more than just reading skills. "The students gain so much in self-esteem and self-confidence," says Tubbs.

Development of social skills and group behavior are also important elements in the youth program at Hickory Street Youth Center, Dayton, Ohio, where US-2 Lynn Meadows is director. Her program is co-sponsored by the Van Buren United Methodist Community Center and the East Dayton Lutheran Community Ministry.

The center serves young people, ages three to 18, in an inner-city, racially mixed neighborhood with high unemployment. Some of the residents are second-generation Appalachian families who moved there either from Kentucky or Tennessee, says Ms. Meadows, who is a native of St. Simon's Island, Georgia, and a graduate of Emory University.

The Hickory Street staff conducts Christian education classes, weekly home visits. They also counsel high-school dropouts, incorporating development of job

skills in some group sessions. Many of the area's families receive public assistance or earn low wages in factories.

It is important to help the young people build strong self-images, and good work habits, says Meadows. "We try to allow (the youngsters) to earn—rather than give them—money to go to summer camps."

US-2s also serve in campus ministries, parish ministries, and institutional ministries, as outreach workers, teachers, residence managers, and youth and community organizers. They play an integral part in the church's mission outreach program.

As The United Methodist Church approaches new frontiers in mission, it looks to expand the ranks of US-2 mission workers. Opportunities are available in the United States, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. US-2 applicants must be between 22-30, and have a college degree or significant work experience. Willingness to adapt to a different cultural setting is important, so is faith commitment.

For more information about the US-2 Program, you may write or call:

Mission Personnel Resources Program Department, General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1470, New York, NY, 10115. The toll free number is 1-800-654-5929. □

*Brenda Webber*

*Bill Tubbs at literacy program office in Biloxi, Mississippi.*



## The Alternate Tour in Washington, D.C.

by Charles E. Cole

Winter in Washington: snow, the temperature in the 30s. Night has fallen. Three of us arrive in North-east Washington at an old building, formerly Pierce School.

Around a corner of the building we encounter about 100 men, hands in pockets, shivering.

When we get to the back door two or three men try to enter with us. A security guard bars them. "Only a few at a time," he says. The men are going in for their evening meal, but as we discover in a minute, the dining area is only large enough for about 25 men. The rest await their turn outside.

Upstairs we see, and smell, the bedrooms. Each bed has a blanket, no sheets. The shelter, which is run by the Council of Churches of Greater Washington, provides for 170 men each night.

Sister Veronica Daniels is a Benedictine and a registered nurse. She is on the staff of Christ House, an ecumenical center which runs a medical recovery shelter for the homeless. Each evening she drives over to Pierce to provide the men with preventive care. Tonight, Nancy Newman, a fourth-year medical student at Case Western Reserve in Cleveland, has come along to help.

There are about a dozen patients with colds, sores, and other ailments. Sister Veronica spends a long time with the first patient, a tall and articulate man who has peripheral vascular leg problems. According to Sister Veronica, these problems are common among those who spend most of the day on their feet. Scratches and abrasions quickly turn into sores, which linger and can get infected.

She rebandages the leg, discusses with the man how he can get help. They decide that the

Veterans Administration Hospital is the best bet—and sends him away with some medicine. She promises to call the hospital for him, and as he leaves, the man says, "I know you always do what you say you will."

The next patient has a cold, but Sister refuses to give him medicine. "You've been drinking," she says. Instead she gives him a bowl of hot soup and an orange. She doesn't just hand him the orange—she peels it for him. He sits in the anteroom eating while Sister retrieves a pair of boots and some army surplus clothes for him.

One of the security guards comes in with a cold. Sister helps him, then speaks to him about the cold water in the shower. He says he will do something about it. As he leaves, she reminds him not to forget the shower.

Nancy has by this time taken the temperatures of several men, including one who reports he has been drinking his cold medicine straight from the bottle. "Don't do that," she advises. "It will dry out your system."

Sister Veronica tells me that alcoholism is a big problem, but not hard drugs. "I have one man who was on the streets and an alcoholic for 41 years. I see him every day. He has not taken a drink for 5 weeks. That's a victory."

How does she keep herself going, I ask, seeing these people every night? "I have to hand it back to God at the end of the day," she says. "I know then there's nothing more I can do to rescue these people."

And what is she really trying to accomplish? "If I can let people know there is someone in life who cares, who will hold their hands, let them know they're not alone,

that's all I ask. What they are is a gift to me."

This excursion is only one small part of the ministries of Christ House and its parent organization, Columbia Road Health Services. The latter is, in turn, an outgrowth of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in Washington.

At Christ Home, a four-story converted apartment building in the Adams-Morgan section of Washington, the first floor contains a clinic. Here is where the homeless enter and are examined and treated by one of four physicians. Usually a patient will be seen by a social worker as well. The medical unit includes a dozen or more nurses and other staff, including a family practice nurse who supervises the floor.

The doctors, nurses, and other staff come from many different religious groups, including United Methodist. Once in the community, religious backgrounds seem to fade away in the context of overwhelming human need.

The second floor of Christ House has ten bedrooms where as many as 34 patients may stay at one time. The length of stay varies. Some remain only a few days, some several weeks. The average length of stay is 28 days. The purpose of the unit is to allow people with no home a place to convalesce.

Most of the patients are treated by the staff at Christ House, then remain until they are well enough to leave. Some are referred to hospitals or specialists for diagnosis and treatment. They may then come back to Christ House to recuperate.

The staff tries to find a place for the patients to stay after their release. Sometimes the only place is a shelter like Pierce School.

The Columbia Road Health Services is across the street, right next to the Potter's House, the famous coffee shop originated by Church of the Saviour almost 30 years ago. The Health Services is a family clinic offering preventive care. The same medical professionals who work at Christ House work there, and there are additional staff.

About 70 percent of the patients at the Health Services are Central Americans. The clinic offers prena-

tal and pediatrics care as well as classes in health and other areas—family finances, for example.

I talked with Dr. Janelle Goetcheus, a physician at these centers and one of the guiding lights. She and other staff live on the third and fourth floors of Christ House because, she says, she wanted the patients to be in her house.

Apart from this unusual willingness to let the homeless come into her own house, Dr. Goetcheus seems perfectly normal. She said the ministry began almost a decade ago as a holistic ministry. "We

don't use the word 'holistic' much any more," she said. "We found that it led persons to expect alternative forms of medicine.

And another thing: "I worry about the church being enthusiastic about holistic care when people lack basic care," she said.

Nevertheless, the ministry exhibits its own form of wholeness. I participated in the regular Thursday evening meal with the staff and patients at Christ House. We had communion, then ate a common meal. In this way spirituality becomes part of the "treatment" at

Christ House.

Through its relation with Church of the Saviour, Christ House and the Health Services also try to help the poor with jobs and housing and other support. This integration of services around the needs of the person or family also reflects a kind of wholeness.

Dr. Goetcheus has her reasons for not talking about holistic ministry, but in their own way Christ House and the Columbia Road Health Services seem to embrace healing in all its dimensions. That includes the psychological. One of the men at Pierce School reported he had spent time at Christ House, too. "They really motivate you," he said.

Yes, I thought, they certainly do. But the Rev. Gordon Cosby explained how. This veteran pastor of Church of the Saviour gave me his philosophy of leadership. "People have to be called first," he said. "Then you build a structure around that—not vice-versa."

And that is how you find people who risk their lives, going out in the cold on dark nights to bandage the sores of the poor and feed them with hot soup and fresh oranges. □

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# media watch

## Resources for Viewing

This month, *New World Outlook* introduces another media review column, devoted to film and video movies. It will offer descriptions and ordering information on dramas, documentaries and animated features that will inform your family and congregation on important issues. It will also provide a framework for those who wish to be actively involved with these issues. When major motion pictures handle human or spiritual matters particularly well, we'll tell you about them too.

This first installment offers a diversity of video and film offerings on poverty in America.

"Faces of Poverty" (20 mins., produced by United Methodist Communications, 1/2-inch VHS, 16mm, color, 1987). Sale, \$29.95; Rental, \$18.00. A subtle, educational production which reminds us that since most Americans are only two paychecks away from poverty, any of us could easily join the ranks of the destitute. It uses vignettes of working poor families to debunk prevailing assumptions about the poor. Viewers thus discover that the majority of the poor want to work, are usually not on welfare and are not people of color.

"Crush" (15 mins., produced by United Methodist Communications, 1/2-inch VHS, color, 1987). Sale, \$29.95. Ron and Mable, once a working-class couple who were beset by health and economic problems, maintain their independence and decency despite being forced to live in a shack they've built under a highway bridge. "Crush" lets them describe their outlook on their circumstances as they get by on selling aluminum cans and exchanging favors with others in their situation.

"No Place Like Home" (53 mins., produced by the National Council of Churches, 1/2-inch VHS, color, 1987). Sale, \$49.95;

Rental, \$25.00. Originally broadcast earlier this year on NBC-TV, this penetrating documentary, narrated by Edwin Newman, establishes remarkable intimacy with several homeless but variously sheltered families and their advocates. Shot in Dallas, Cincinnati, Covington, Kentucky, and the South Bronx, we eventually follow two of these families into the joy and security of having their own homes while at the same time, they receive disturbing news about another homeless family they know. This documentary is of particular value to potential organizers of shelters for women, single men or families because it addresses strategies to help them deal with their motivational as well as economic dilemmas while homeless.

"Catch the Spirit" series (5-10 mins. each, produced by United Methodist Communications, 1/2-inch VHS, color, 1986-1988). Sale, \$25.00; Rental, \$12.50. This weekly UMC television magazine has devoted several reports to showing how congregations as well as the national church is responding to the needs of poor Americans. This series has been particularly sensitive to the plight of America's farm families, with reporter Mike Wendland having covered more than five farm crisis-related stories. They include:

### ORDERING INFORMATION

All United Methodist Communications and National Council of Churches films and videos may be rented or purchased through Ecu-Film, the ecumenical distribution service based in Nashville, Tennessee. For further information, call toll-free, 1-800-251-4091.

Fries Distribution, 6922 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90028, 213-466-2266, or in New York, 212-593-2220.

-Program 17, an entire half-hour devoted to the current American farm crisis. Excellent human interest pieces—discussion with a married sociologist couple who have conducted a study of farm foreclosure victims.

-Program 24, with a report on the Farm Counseling Service, Inc., an innovative credit and financial advising business that's run by a Methodist farm couple, who went bankrupt, but who have now counseled 500 other endangered farmers.

Other "Catch the Spirit" segments that have looked at poverty in the U.S. include:

-Program 26, with a report on the Methodist ministry that responds to U.S. and world hunger through "gleaning," the Old Testament practice of gathering fallen or slightly damaged field vegetables and fruits. The Society of St. Andrew has provided more than 120 million meals in less than nine years in this way.

-Program 11, which has a piece on an outstanding ministry to the poor that feeds 250 people a day, houses 15 or 20 each night in a church, Baldwin Avenue UMC in Pontiac, Mich., that only has 82 members.

Hollywood has produced several poignant portrayals of impoverished Americans: "The Grapes of Wrath" (1940), "Our Daily Bread" (1934), "The Southerner" (1945) and "Hallelujah!" (1929).

One of the better recent depictions of poverty has been the Martin Sheen telefeature "Samaritan: The Mitch Snyder Story," (150 mins., available through video rental stores, Fries Distribution, 1/2-inch VHS, color, 1986). Check stores for prices. A tough TV drama about homelessness. Martin Sheen portrays the activist Mitch Snyder, the former Madison Avenue public relations man whose skillfully staged homeless "happenings" and his own near-death, 51-day hunger fast forced Congress and President Reagan to fund a model shelter in Washington, D.C. Cicely Tyson is the multi-layered bag lady who joins the Community for Creative Non-Violence in its endeavors. □

TONY CHAPELLE

## Books

**Women and Children Last: The Plight of Poor Women in Affluent America**  
By Ruth Sidel, Viking Press, 1986, 236 pp., \$16.95

**For Crying Out Loud: Women and Poverty in the United States**  
Edited by Rochelle Lefkowitz and Ann Withorn, Pilgrim Press, 1986, 396 pp. \$12.95

**Families in Peril: An Agenda for Social Change**  
By Marian Wright Edelman, Harvard University Press, 1987, 127 pp., \$15.00

Anyone genuinely concerned about the future of the United States and about the well-being of children and families would do well to take seriously the combined message of these three books. While each has a distinctive point of view and makes a special contribution, together they make a strong witness to what the U.S. Representative, Patricia Schroeder, calls "The scandal of the 1980's." The concentration of women and children, particularly women and children of color, in poverty; the reasons why this has happened; ideas and strategies for change—these make up the heart of these perceptive and compelling books.

Ruth Sidel cuts through our perception of this country as compassionate and placing great value on children and families by using the metaphor of the luxury ship "Titanic". While we know that "women and children first" generally guided actions at sea that terrible night, we're less likely to know that only eight percent of first and second class women passengers drowned, while 45 percent of third class women died. Children fared even worse: three percent of first and second class children died, but 70 percent of third class children perished. Like the "Titanic," she says, America in the 1980s glitters and gleams, and many believe it is unsinkable. But we do not have enough life rafts for everyone and when disaster strikes, it is poor women and children who are hurt first and most seriously.

By interviewing 100 poor women in 12 states, Sidel provides "a glimpse of the people behind the statistics." She demonstrates through thorough but clear analysis of data that as Americans in general were moving out of poverty in the 1970s and 1980s, women and children were moving in. Factors in women's poverty are identified as changes in family status (especially divorce), teen pregnancy, unequal pay, unemployment, a welfare system which systematically maintains families below the poverty level and deep cuts in human services since 1980.

The last chapter of the Sidel book is an urgent call for a national family policy, including three major areas of reform: the arena of work; universal entitlements specifically connected to the lives of families, particularly those with young children; and the welfare system. She concludes with these words:

What we must recognize, above all, is that the poor are not a separate breed. They need what we all need: the opportunity to feel part of our society; to love and care for one another; and to participate in meaningful, decently paid work. These goals are not beyond our reach. We have but to commit ourselves to their fulfillment.

*For Crying Out Loud* is a collection of articles and first-person accounts by single mothers, aging widows, women who are urban and rural, Black and Hispanic, old and young. The stories are filled with suffering but also with courage, creativity and dignity. Several themes run through these articles and stories: the common needs of all women alongside the very particular needs of certain groups; the complexity of women's poverty; the inextricable link between the welfare system and "women's issues"; the affirmation that poor



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women must speak for themselves and define a way out of poverty that grows from the bottom up.

The book is divided into four parts. The first presents several different perspectives on the "feminization of poverty." From Diana Pearce, who first coined the phrase, comes a sociological analysis of wages, welfare, public and private income and work incentive programs. At the other end of the spectrum are Pamela Sparr and Linda Burnham, who argue that the "feminization of poverty" model is narrow and inadequate in that it underplays class differences, obscures racism as a determinant of economic status, downplays the extent of poverty among Black males and ignores potential allies like working class men. Part two allows eight very diverse women to speak, underlining the fact that different women are poor for different reasons and have different options for escaping poverty. We hear about being poor from the perspective of a welfare mother, a Black woman, a Puerto Rican woman, teenaged mothers, older women and rural women. We begin to understand a point Ruth Sidel also makes, that a very small percentage of the population is "persistently poor"; most are "temporarily poor"—they are much like the rest of us, but have had a bad year or two.

In the third section of the anthology, six authors explore why America seems to hate its poor, to feel a need to torment and punish people for their poverty. Betty Mandell suggests that distrust of the poor is built into the welfare system alongside the stinginess of the state, giving poor people just enough to survive in dependence but never enough to live independently and with dignity. Other writers suggest that poverty and homelessness are the inevitable results of conventional definitions of "woman" taken to the limit and that the New Right's challenge to the welfare state is at least in part a punishment of women for daring to live without men. This book, like *Women and Children Last*, ends with specific strategies for change which address the underlying causes of women's poverty. Women involved in a model program in Boston describe why it has worked for them. Among the suggested approaches are: teaching critical economics to women, redefining

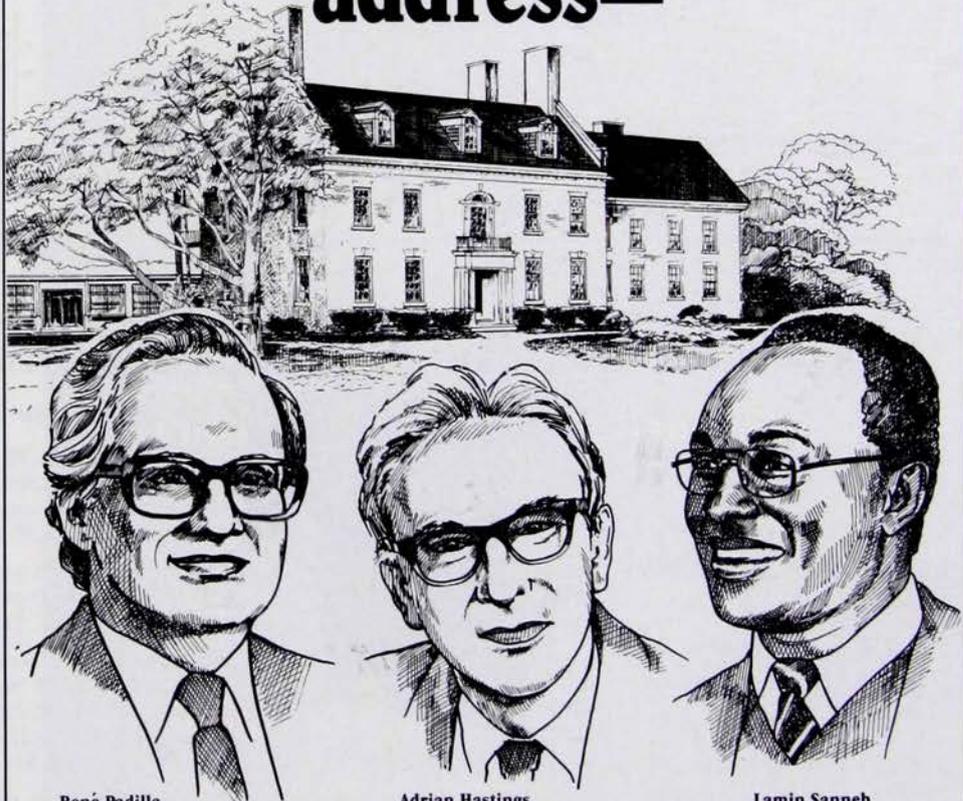
work to include caring for human beings, mobilizing poor women as a political force and embracing the concept of pay equity.

The third book in this potent trilogy is by Marian Wright Edelman, the passionate, articulate and highly effective president of the Children's Defense Fund. Saying "I am less interested in formulating theoretical frameworks of policy for children and families than I am in feeding, clothing, healing, housing, and educating as many American children as possible," she in fact goes on to suggest bold and feasible ways to do both. She

appeals to readers' consciences and their self-interests by demonstrating that pervasive child and family poverty affects every segment of society: black and white, urban and rural, those who are poor today and those who may be poor tomorrow.

In *Families in Peril*, Edelman exposes widely held myths that cloud our understanding of teen pregnancy, single parenthood, unemployment and welfare. She shows that overall, whites are losing ground faster than blacks. In a section entitled "Where are the

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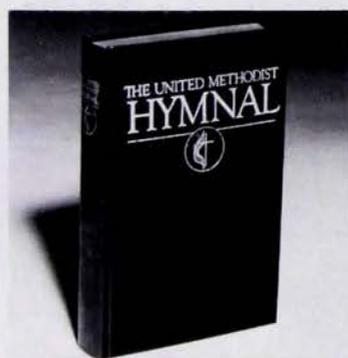
Black Fathers?", she speaks with compassion of a lost generation of fathers—young black men jobless from lack of education and training, unable to marry and support a family.

Like Sidel and editors of Lefkowitz and Withorn, Edelman concludes with ideas and suggestions for addressing the problems of poverty for children and families. The difference is that, in many ways, her entire book is a plan of action, calling for a comprehensive campaign to prevent teen pregnancies, for a range of preventive investments in health, nutrition and child care as well as steps to raise the minimum wage, exempt the working poor from federal taxes and bolster education and employment opportunities for heads of families. Welfare reform strategies are presented as one element in preventing poverty of female-headed households and the development of a "permanent underclass." Edelman calls for a coalition of leaders from community organizations, the private sector and all levels of government, committed to meeting the pressing needs of families.

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United States (new presidential leadership to be selected) and in the United Methodist Church (General Conference and a new program quadrennium). We are fortunate to have these three cogent books available to guide us as we make decisions in both public and religious spheres about the well-being of women, children and families. There is much wisdom here; may we have the ears to hear and the will to act.

PEGGY HALSEY

*Peggy Halsey is executive secretary for Ministries with Women and Families in Crisis in the National Program Division of the General Board of Global Ministries.*

#### Viewpoint

*Continued from p. 54*

Africa to accept certain goals for economic justice: Are pay scales above poverty levels? Is there equality among the races in wages and employment? Are serious efforts being made to provide affordable housing for workers? Is the company openly committed to the reform or abolition of apartheid?

What would happen in this country if every Christian, every concerned citizen, began to ask the same kind of "embarrassing" questions of every organization with which we do business? Are wages above the absolute minimum requirements? Are there provisions for health care insurance and some kind of pension? Does the company support low-cost housing in the community? Ask, pointedly and publicly, not just of profitable corporations or chain stores, but of your municipal departments, your restaurants and colleges, the businessmen who magnanimously donate food to local soup kitchens, even of your own church establishment.

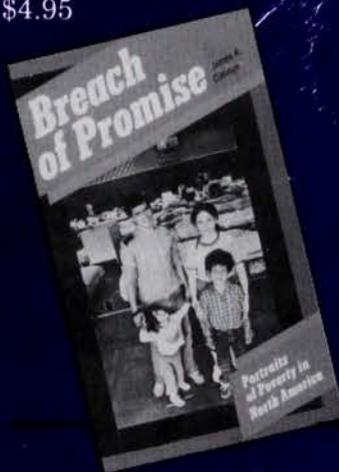
More serious, and more sacrificial, than a donation for famine relief, more far reaching than a grape boycott, more lasting than a Christmas basket or a Meal-on-Wheels, the implementation of such "Decency Principles" in our own localities could ultimately wipe out hunger more effectively than Food Stamps or soup kitchens. Charity, however essential an expression of Christian love is not a substitute for economic justice. □

## Mission Study

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## ORDER NOW!

Resources available from Service Center, General Board of Global Ministries, 7820 Reading Road/Caller No. 1800, Cincinnati, OH 45222-1800 or call: (513) 761-2100.

Film and video resources available only from EcuFilm. Call toll free: (800) 251-4091.



Creighton Lacy

## Poverty is the worst form of violence

In the biographical film, Mahatma Gandhi asserted: "Poverty is the worst form of violence." Jesse Jackson sounds a similar note during his current political campaign: "Today, racial violence still occurs but it's illegal, so we can struggle effectively to end it. But economic violence is legal and is devastating the lives of Americans of all races."

We are rightly alarmed about nuclear arms, international terrorism, pollution of land and sea and air. We are gravely—sometimes generously—concerned about mass famine, now worse in Ethiopia than a few years ago. But we find it easy to ignore hunger and malnutrition in our own nation and in our own communities.

Pioneers on the American frontier practised neighborly sharing reminiscent of the Early Church. By the end of the 19th century, waves of immigrants and underpaid workers had created urban ghettos of poverty and misery hitherto unimagined. Frank Mason North, later to write the beloved hymn, "When Cross the Crowded Ways of Life," declared in 1892 that a sensitive Christian—

looks into the eyes of men and women gaunt with hunger and clothed with rags, cursed by the poverty of vice, some of them—but more, ground into the dust by the inequities of industrial injustice and the cruel pride of social caste. About him swarm myriads of children doomed to warped lives and vicious surroundings from their birth; children with no

home when night comes; the alleys and thoroughfares their playgrounds by day . . .

For decades the only recourse lay in Christian charity, in soup kitchens and breadlines, in the benevolence of churches and philanthropists. Only from the Depression and the New Deal of the 1930s did any substantial national response emerge, largely in the form of surplus commodities and "make-work projects."

Not until the '60s was hunger in America "discovered," to the surprise of most citizens in this promised and promising land. Gradually, through federal, state, and local programs, a network of agencies developed to meet specifically identified needs: Food Stamps, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, school lunches, assistance for Women, Infants and Children. By the late 1970s, according to some observers, America was "well on the way to meeting its most critical nutritional deficiencies.

However, in the past few years destitution has been increasing in these United States. According to a 1986 Department of Commerce report, 32.4 million people were living below the poverty line (about \$8,700 per year for a family of three). Forty percent of these were in "sub-poverty," receiving only *half* of a subsistence minimum. Forty percent were under 18. In fact, *Time* magazine reports that one in five of America's children lives in poverty. Today dependence on church and private resources is growing; Pittsburgh, for example, increased its emergency food centers from 50 to 250. While the majority of "suppliants" at soup kitchens are still single individuals, often homeless, two-thirds are now families, many of them designated "the new poor." Food shortages are unavoidable when people with the least income must spend 85 percent of it on housing. Finally, the gap between the economically lowest one-fifth of the population and the highest fifth is growing.

While countries overseas have desperate problems of food production and transportation, we are one of the few nations without such handicaps, yet with a serious

amount of poverty. Put another way, the United States "could wipe out hunger by our policies"—if we would. But food assistance programs have been cut while the need increases: school meals by 41 percent, Aid to Families with Dependent Children by 19 percent between 1981 and 1984. Which is cause and which is effect?

There are those who believe sincerely that such responsibility should be shifted back to the churches, the soup kitchens and to the generosity of individuals. Others recognize that such private, civic aid is often unreliable, inefficient, erratic. We expect Thanksgiving baskets to last until Christmas. At some "food banks" the principal commodities donated are soap and pampers. We spend a great deal of time "moving cans from one storeroom to another." Those of us involved in any way with charitable food distribution need at least a three-fold agenda for effective response: 1) to be informed of needs and available resources; 2) to engage in direct action, contributing food and time, organization and transportation; 3) to become advocates for change.

Nancy Amidei is a free lance writer and speaker, always stimulating, often provocative. She has been a Peace Corps volunteer in Africa, a government bureaucrat in the Food Stamp program, director of the Food Research and Action Center. From her recent addresses come some of these statistics, many of these ideas. One of her convictions, eloquently illustrated, is that "emergency food systems are fine for emergencies, but they do nothing to change the situation." In other words, our pantries and soup kitchens, our overnight shelters and clothing closets, are fine for temporary need, for large- or small-scale crises. They are neither adequate nor desirable for the long haul because they do nothing to correct the causes.

Nancy Amidei's current crusade is to get churches and communities actively pushing for what she calls "Decency Principles." Readers familiar with the South African scene will have heard of the Sullivan Principles, which encourage corporations doing business in South

*Continued on p. 53*

# CALENDAR

## JUNE

**Summer Intern Orientation;** National Program Division, General Board of Global Ministries; New York, NY; June 6-9

**Annual Conference, Methodist Church in Cuba;** Pinar del Rio, PR, Cuba; June 12-19, 1988.

**Ecumenical Moment '88,** a 12-day ecumenical living and learning experience with theologians James Cone, Justo Gonzalez, Letty Russell and others; Auburn Theological Seminary; New York, NY; June 20-July 1

## JULY

**Mission Intern Orientation;** Drew University, Madison, NJ; July 5-15; Marymount College, Tarrytown, NY; July 16-20; New York City; July 21-26.

**United Methodist Development Fund (UMDF)** Board of Directors; San Francisco, CA; July 8, 9

**Jurisdictional Conferences of The United Methodist Church;** July 12-16

**Orientation of New Bishops;** Lake Junaluska, NC; July 12-16

**Frontier Annual Conference of the Methodist Church of Mexico;** Torreon, Mexico; July 12-17.

**Missionary Conference** sponsored by the World Program Division of the General Board of Global Ministries; Marymount College, Tarrytown, NY; July 16-20

**US-2 Orientation;** National Program Division, General Board of Global Ministries; CARMA Conference Center; Washington, DC; July 28-August 13

## AUGUST

**Centennial Convocation:** United Methodist Deaconesses and Home Missionaries; Celebrating 100 years of service; Keynote address, Bishop Leontine Kelly; Regular jurisdictional meetings, recognition services, and personal and corporate worship; Also speaking, Mrs. Gwen White, Mrs. Ruth Daugherty, and Dr. James Logan; St. Paul School of Theology, Kansas City, MO; Aug. 3-7

**General Assembly of the Methodist Church in Panama;** Bi-annual Annual Conference; Volcan, Panama; Aug. 12-15.

**Purdue West '88,** California-Pacific Annual Conference United Methodist Men Convocation IV; University of California; Irvine, CA; Aug. 26-28.

**Black Youth Convocation;** Ministry and leadership skills development conference for black youths and their advisors; Sponsored by Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Inc.; Clarke College, Atlanta, GA; Aug. 3-6.

## Great Moments In Mission...

1846. A Swedish immigrant to the U.S., The Rev. Olaf Gustaff Hedstrom, starts a Methodist mission which eventually led to the founding of Norwegian Methodism. Hedstrom's "church" in New York City harbor was the ship "Bethel Mission". And one of his converts was one Peter Peterson, founding father of what is today the 7,000-member Norway Annual Conference.



**Youth '88;** Sponsored by the General Board of Discipleship; 5000 United Methodist youth from around the world gather for Bible study and discussion to share and strengthen their commitment to Christ; Western Illinois University; Macomb, IL; Aug. 8-12

**World Council of Churches' Central Committee Meeting;** Hannover, West Germany; Aug. 10-21

**Reunion of Nigerian missionaries;** Westmar College; LeMars, Iowa; Aug. 12-14

**Summer Intern Debriefing;** National Program Division, General Board of Global Ministries; New York, NY; Aug. 19-21

## SEPTEMBER

**General Board of Global Ministries Organizational Meeting;** New York, NY; Sept. 12-16.

## OCTOBER

**Appalachian Development Committee Executive meeting;** a dialogue with the Cooperative Ministry in Washington County; Marietta, Ohio; Oct. 10-11

**General Board of Global Ministries Annual Meeting;** New York; Oct. 14-21

**General Council on Ministries Organizational Meeting;** Oct. 13-Nov. 4

## NOVEMBER

**Commission of Religion in Appalachia; Annual Meeting;** Lutheridge Retreat Facility; Hendersonville, NC; Nov. 1-3.

**Appalachian Assembly VI;** quadrennial assembly to focus on Appalachian issues, provide arena for sharing among projects, and set goals for the next quadrennium; Jackson Mills 4-H Center, Weston, WV; Nov. 29-Dec. 1.

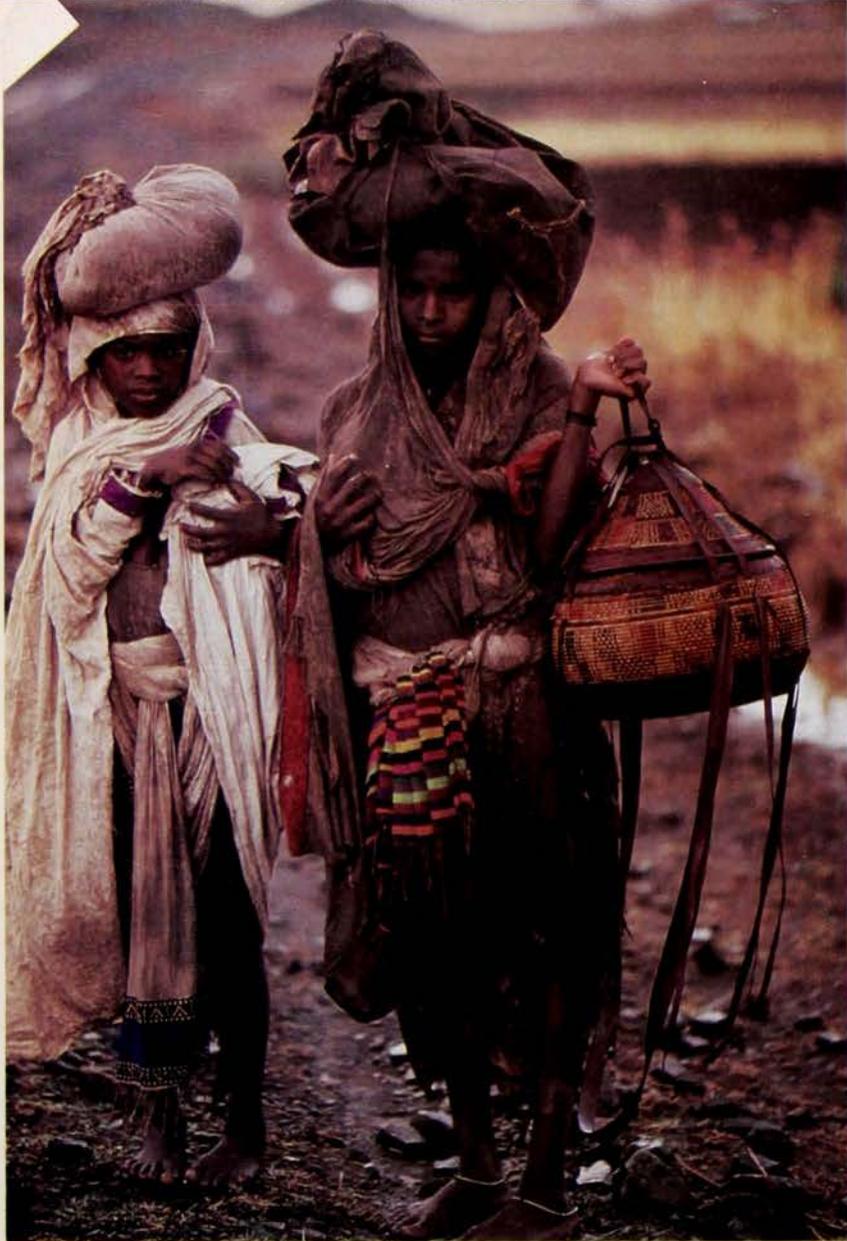
## DECEMBER

**New Officer's Training Event;** Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries; New York, NY; Dec. 1-4.

## JANUARY

**General Assembly of the Methodist Church in Costa Rica.** In addition to electing a new bishop, the assembly will hold a special commemorative service for the 200th anniversary of Wesley's conversion; San Jose, Costa Rica; Jan. 24-29.

*To have your mission event or meeting listed in the NEW WORLD OUTLOOK Calendar, send details to: Calendar Editor, NEW WORLD OUTLOOK, Room 1349, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, New York 10115. Material must be received four months prior to the date(s) of the event(s).*



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