

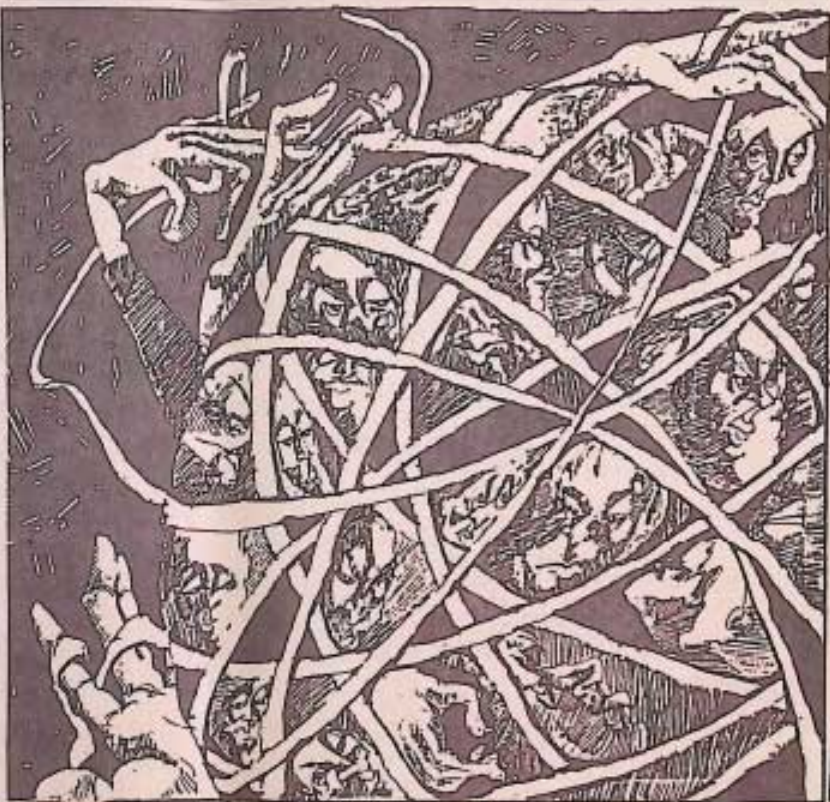
BY NO MEANS

NON ILLEGITIMUM CARBORUNDUM

Homeless Perspectives: A News And Opinion Monthly

FALL

OCTOBER, 1991



SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

By No MEANS, a monthly Bay Area publication, offers the viewpoints of homeless/low income people, social service providers and others concerned about the problems of homelessness and other pressing social welfare issues.

YES! I want a one year subscription to *By No MEANS*. Enclosed is my check or money order for \$15.00 regular or \$5.00 senior/low income, or \$25.00 for non profit organizations, or \$30.00 for businesses and corporations.

Send to: *By No MEANS*, 191 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, _____ State, _____ Zip: _____

CITIZENS LIKE US

by: Sandy J. Weiner and
J. Walter Carson

While the Governor and our State Legislators are breathing a sigh of relief that they can finally take their vacations and put the state budget mess behind them, we Californians now have to live with the short-sighted, devastating choices they have made.

Although the deficit was huge and hard choices needed to be made, our elected officials unfortunately once again demonstrated their loyalty to big money and power rather than ensuring that the tax burden was indeed spread equitably and fairly. Guess who got to pick up the tab again this time around? Working people and the poor, naturally. Welfare recipients and homeless people were hit the hardest at a time when everyone is identifying their plight as the largest social problem of our cities. Meanwhile, taxes to the richest business concerns in the state were reduced to record lows.

Corporations were hardly affected; in fact, crucial tax legislation was altered at the last possible moment to favor their interests. Taxing the rich was a last ditch effort to protect corporations rather than to protect the poor and middle class. It didn't even reinstate the taxes that were once there,

never mind requiring them to pay a realistic share on the basis of current recessionary circumstances.

"Realignment" was a way to avoid the issues of increased need for basic social programs and decreased revenues for the same. Plenty of slack left in the "compromise" budget for conglomerates and holding companies, though. Oh boy, was there ever. And let's not forget who got the green light for the spiffiest food line in California, since the business lunch reduction was ignored. Glide and Saint Anthony's never had it so good. But maybe we'll get some good donations from it, hey?

And what does the \$70,000 mortgage interest cap really mean? Only that the richest property owners (i.e., those whose property is plentiful or expensive enough that they will benefit from a \$70,000 mortgage interest deduction on their taxes) will be able to use their tax savings to consolidate a stranglehold on the rental market for families and single householders, who will just have to bite the bullet and keep paying more than their fair share of the tax load and continue living in rent slavery while landlords blithely plow their profits into new investments (and PACS). An interesting sidelight on the dispensation created by passage of Proposition 13 is that since most homes in the state of California have already been resold at least once (and thus will be exempt), corporations who deal in developing commercial properties such as office buildings and mall construction projects will become

the only real beneficiaries of the new tax break. A sweet deal, if you happen to control or own a corporation of this type. Otherwise, you pay the going rate.

Thus, the new regressive tax system will hit those with tight budgets the hardest, namely, aid recipients, retirees on fixed-income pensions and seasonal or low-paid workers for major companies. At the same time, health care, child care and affordable housing haven't been addressed at all — in fact, working people in general will be worse off — small businesses, health care credit, mass transit, public education, renters' credit and other basic services will also suffer. Needless to say, taxes covering these areas will go up steadily and almost certainly be drawn from a rapidly shrinking urban tax base. Which will accelerate inner city deterioration, which will lead to the need for more tax-based crisis funding, leading to new levies — the forecast is appalling but inescapable.

Yes, citizens, it's that old, old story — political fraud continues to be used against poor and working people — not the rich and the corporations. And who elects these bandits?

Citizens like us.

Sandy Weiner is co-director of the *Income Rights Project*. J. Walter Carson co-edits *By No MEANS*.

"What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By No MEANS!"
Romans 9.14

CITIZENS LIKE US

by: **Sandy J. Weiner and
J. Walter Carson**

While the Governor and our State Legislators are breathing a sigh of relief that they can finally take their vacations and put the state budget mess behind them, we Californians now have to live with the short-sighted, devastating choices they have made.

Although the deficit was huge and hard choices needed to be made, our elected officials unfortunately once again demonstrated their loyalty to big money and power rather than ensuring that the tax burden was indeed spread equitably and fairly. Guess who got to pick up the tab again this time around? Working people and the poor, naturally. Welfare recipients and homeless people were hit the hardest at a time when everyone is identifying their plight as the largest social problem of our cities. Meanwhile, taxes to the richest business concerns in the state were reduced to record lows.

Corporations were hardly affected; in fact, crucial tax legislation was altered at the last possible moment to favor their interests. Taxing the rich was a last ditch effort to protect corporations rather than to protect the poor and middle class. It didn't even reinstate the taxes that were once there,

never mind requiring them to pay a realistic share on the basis of current recessionary circumstances.

"Realignment" was a way to avoid the issues of increased need for basic social programs and decreased revenues for the same. Plenty of slack left in the "compromise" budget for conglomerates and holding companies, though. Oh boy, was there ever. And let's not forget who got the green light for the spiffiest food line in California, since the business lunch reduction was ignored. Glide and Saint Anthony's never had it so good. But maybe we'll get some good donations from it, hey?

And what does the \$70,000 mortgage interest cap really mean? Only that the richest property owners (i.e., those whose property is plentiful or expensive enough that they will benefit from a \$70,000 mortgage interest deduction on their taxes) will be able to use their tax savings to consolidate a stranglehold on the rental market for families and single householders, who will just have to bite the bullet and keep paying more than their fair share of the tax load and continue living in rent slavery while landlords blithely plow their profits into new investments (and PACS). An interesting sidelight on the dispensation created by passage of Proposition 13 is that since most homes in the state of California have already been resold at least once (and thus will be exempt), corporations who deal in developing commercial properties such as office buildings and mall construction projects will become

the only real beneficiaries of the new tax break. A sweet deal, if you happen to control or own a corporation of this type. Otherwise, you pay the going rate.

Thus, the new regressive tax system will hit those with tight budgets the hardest, namely, aid recipients, retirees on fixed-income pensions and seasonal or low-paid workers for major companies. At the same time, health care, child care and affordable housing haven't been addressed at all — in fact, working people in general will be worse off — small businesses, health care credit, mass transit, public education, renters' credit and other basic services will also suffer. Needless to say, taxes covering these areas will go up steadily and almost certainly be drawn from a rapidly shrinking urban tax base. Which will accelerate inner city deterioration, which will lead to the need for more tax-based crisis funding, leading to new levies — the forecast is appalling but inescapable.

Yes, citizens, it's that old, old story — political fraud continues to be used against poor and working people — not the rich and the corporations. And who elects these bandits?

Citizens like us.

*Sandy Weiner is co-director of the
Income Rights Project. J. Walter
Carson co-edits *By No MEANS*.*

**"What shall we say then? Is
there injustice on God's
part? *By No MEANS!*"
Romans 9.14**

[WEINBERG from last page]

anced meals served to the children and their care. Here in California we have a little over two thousand child care centers and about 19,500 family day care homes that participate in the program. That is for children from birth to the age of twelve although handicapped children or migrant children can get meals up to the age of fifteen. They serve four component meals similar to the school lunch.

One more. There is one called the summer food service program which is designed to be an extension of the school lunch program into the summer but unfortunately it doesn't work that way. This is one we have been doing a lot of outreach on recently. It allows schools, government entities or non-profit organizations to get federal reimbursement for serving meals to children during the summer when the school cafeterias are closed. Unfortunately, you would think that school people would be interested in seeing their pupils get good nutrition year round. What we find here and throughout the nation is that low-income families have a much harder time in the summer. I mean, for kids who get a school lunch and/or breakfast, those families have to provide maybe five to ten meals per week per child on the same resources they have year round and it just does not work. Low-income families are showing up more often during the summer at the food pantries.

This program could be the answer to this dilemma but unfor-

tunately, in California last year (the summer of 1990) only about 130,000 children a day got a meal, one or more meals, so that is roughly ten percent of the low-income kids getting a school lunch.

We are kind of disgusted with the schools because a lot of them intentionally close up their schools before noon so they won't have to feed the children and we think they ought to have a positive obligation to do so.

All of the programs I described are at best hitting maybe fifty to sixty percent of need with the exception of the summer food program which is maybe about ten percent. So there are a lot of people out there who would be eligible for these programs but are not getting the benefits from them. We spend a lot of time telling people about them, where they can go to enroll and get help from these programs.

There is no doubt in my mind, and I've been doing hunger work since the mid-'70's, if it weren't for food banks, you know, the entire local, state and nationwide system of food banks, that we would have some real serious hunger in this country. It is the food banks, the private charities that Reagan and Bush boasted about or the thousand points of light Bush likes to talk about that are really making the difference, that are preventing serious mass starvation on a large scale. Those food banks are recycling literally hundreds of millions of pounds of food that as little as ten years ago was often thrown away. That is not to say it is all nutritious or that

it provides a balanced diet or a great selection. I don't know if you have ever been to a food bank, but they often only have soup starter or soda pop. They are dependant on what is donated to them.

I volunteer regularly at the food bank here in Sacramento and they purchase macaroni and cheese, beans, rice and you know, other staples to add to their food bags, you know, and they are spending a lot of money doing that and private food relief efforts are just strained to the max right now. There is no doubt about that.

Here in Sacramento County during June the Sacramento Food Bank, which is one of two food banks in town, served 144,000 people in June of 1991. I mean, that food bank is begging for money for food for help that anybody can give. When I go over there now, and I usually volunteer there on Thursday nights, there is hardly anything left on the shelves. The latter half of the month is their busiest time because people's food stamps run out.

So if it weren't for the private assistance efforts, the food banks and all the food pantries and food closets, soup kitchens that are affiliated with them or operating on their own, we would be really having some serious hunger problems right now. The voluntary giving sector is pretty well burned out, particularly in the religious community. People will get involved in a church soup kitchen or a pantry and you know, when they get into this they think it is just a temporary thing, isn't it nice,

[WEINBERG on next page]

[WEINBERG from last page]

but it has been temporary for more than a dozen years and the problem is not going away.

As far as the programs go, I think you will see an increased use of them. Most of them are known as entitlement programs, which means that Congress supposedly is bound to make good on any expansion of these programs and people who use them legitimately will get the food and the benefits, but that is putting a real strain on the budget. The food stamp program in particular is billions of dollars over what Congress has budgeted because it has gone through such an unprecedented growth stage. The Child and Adult Care Program will undoubtedly see a big increase in business when this new child care development block grant gets underway. This is the federal government's first funding for child care because there will be a lot more centers and day care homes springing up to take care of the business of handling the people getting the vouchers in this new block grant.

There is a certain amount of compassion in the public perception of the current hunger situation and some reserves of extra unused foodstuffs, but it is wearing thin. There are more and more people on the streets. Certainly the AFDC cuts are certainly going to be a factor here in California with people getting less on AFDC and not being able to pay their rent or find affordable housing. You're going to see more children on the

streets. The cut in AFDC benefits is offset only by about one-third by increased food stamp benefits. It is still a net loss. You will simply have more and more people not having the resources to maintain the food and shelter they need. I don't see that turning around.

Those food programs I rattled off to you are the food safety net; they are by and large keeping millions of people in this country from starving and serious health problems due to a lack of food, but they are not nearly covering everybody. There are a lot of homeless people mistakenly thinking they are not eligible for food stamps. There are a lot of homeless kids not going to school so they are not getting the school meals.

If people don't have the resources to get food, they are going to get it one way or the other. I mean everybody has to eat. That is the bottom line for folks, but I wouldn't say crime increases as hunger increases, although anecdotally I think it is true. It is not an unreal assumption to make.

All the food banks say our ultimate goal is to get ourselves out of business and I wish there was not a need for my position where somebody on a full-time basis has to speak up for the needs of the hungry and say we just want to give these kids and their families a little bit of food.

What is so controversial about that? It is a question of where you want to spend your money. Nothing more or less.

FOOD NOT BOMBS

DEMONSTRATION AT GOLDEN GATE PARK

by: Patricia Lyden
and Walter Collins

What began as an orderly demonstration by many Food Not Bombs supporters turned into a potentially embarrassing predicament for the Recreation and Parks Commission on the afternoon of Thursday, the 18th of July, at the Hall of Flowers in Golden Gate Park.

In an apparent attempt by the "powers that be" to undermine the determination of Food Not Bombs to make nourishment available free of charge to any and all human beings who choose to avail themselves of their services, the Mayor and certain other officials are instead laying a strong power base for what is, in its purest form, a truly charitable organization, Food Not Bombs.

Faced with threats of bodily harm from the very people who have sworn to protect the basic human rights of all citizens, Food Not Bombs once again faced those self-proclaimed upholders of law and order to try anew to secure the documentation necessary to maintain their charitable practices within the letter of the local laws and regulations.

Waiting patiently outside the Hall of Flowers for their chance to be heard, visitors and support-

.....
[DEMO on next page]

[WEINBERG from last page]

but it has been temporary for more than a dozen years and the problem is not going away.

As far as the programs go, I think you will see an increased use of them. Most of them are known as entitlement programs, which means that Congress supposedly is bound to make good on any expansion of these programs and people who use them legitimately will get the food and the benefits, but that is putting a real strain on the budget. The food stamp program in particular is billions of dollars over what Congress has budgeted because it has gone through such an unprecedented growth stage. The Child and Adult Care Program will undoubtedly see a big increase in business when this new child care development block grant gets underway. This is the federal government's first funding for child care because there will be a lot more centers and day care homes springing up to take care of the business of handling the people getting the vouchers in this new block grant.

There is a certain amount of compassion in the public perception of the current hunger situation and some reserves of extra unused foodstuffs, but it is wearing thin. There are more and more people on the streets. Certainly the AFDC cuts are certainly going to be a factor here in California with people getting less on AFDC and not being able to pay their rent or find affordable housing. You're going to see more children on the

streets. The cut in AFDC benefits is offset only by about one-third by increased food stamp benefits. It is still a net loss. You will simply have more and more people not having the resources to maintain the food and shelter they need. I don't see that turning around.

Those food programs I rattled off to you are the food safety net; they are by and large keeping millions of people in this country from starving and serious health problems due to a lack of food, but they are not nearly covering everybody. There are a lot of homeless people mistakenly thinking they are not eligible for food stamps. There are a lot of homeless kids not going to school so they are not getting the school meals.

If people don't have the resources to get food, they are going to get it one way or the other. I mean everybody has to eat. That is the bottom line for folks, but I wouldn't say crime increases as hunger increases, although anecdotally I think it is true. It is not an unreal assumption to make.

All the food banks say our ultimate goal is to get ourselves out of business and I wish there was not a need for my position where somebody on a full-time basis has to speak up for the needs of the hungry and say we just want to give these kids and their families a little bit of food.

What is so controversial about that? It is a question of where you want to spend your money. Nothing more or less.

FOOD NOT BOMBS

DEMONSTRATION AT GOLDEN GATE PARK

by: Patricia Lyden
and Walter Collins

What began as an orderly demonstration by many Food Not Bombs supporters turned into a potentially embarrassing predicament for the Recreation and Parks Commission on the afternoon of Thursday, the 18th of July, at the Hall of Flowers in Golden Gate Park.

In an apparent attempt by the "powers that be" to undermine the determination of Food Not Bombs to make nourishment available free of charge to any and all human beings who choose to avail themselves of their services, the Mayor and certain other officials are instead laying a strong power base for what is, in its purest form, a truly charitable organization, Food Not Bombs.

Faced with threats of bodily harm from the very people who have sworn to protect the basic human rights of all citizens, Food Not Bombs once again faced those self-proclaimed upholders of law and order to try anew to secure the documentation necessary to maintain their charitable practices within the letter of the local laws and regulations.

Waiting patiently outside the Hall of Flowers for their chance to be heard, visitors and support-

.....
[DEMO on next page]

[DEMO from last page]

ers alike were entertained with skits, poetry and song. Those who have been unnecessarily beaten by local law enforcement personnel, who sometimes prefer to describe themselves as "Peace Officers," were, under the circumstances, extremely calm and caring in the midst of these same antagonistic officials they still were trying to befriend.

Once inside, a recess called by the Commission was used to try to explain to visitors the purpose of the demonstration and the requests of the Food Not Bombs members. During this time, the members of the Commission entered the room and, without calling the meeting back to order, threatened to end the meeting if immediate silence was not attained.

With a nod and the beginning of acquiescence, the speaker prepared to take his seat, but was instead treated to the spectacle of Commission members walking out the doors of the meeting area sniggering like unrepentant children caught in the act of reprehensible but unregretted misbehavior, who nevertheless expect their naughtiness to go unpunished.

The first of the constitutional rights guaranteed to anyone in the United States of America is life. It is a medical fact that life cannot survive without nourishment. Food Not Bombs is an organization that allows that right to be exercised without identification, proof of need, mandatory adherence to a particular religious or political dogma or other hidden

requirements that entangle the rights and actions of free people in the name of "legitimate social controls and procedures."

Food Not Bombs addresses actual day-to-day issues of life in our community by satisfying basic human needs such as hunger without attempting to justify itself by identifying with a system that no longer tries to even make excuses to the people it uses and abandons. By confronting mainstream attitudes of fear and rejection of poor people in our society with no-strings-attached grassroots nutritional support, Food Not Bombs both gives hope and comfort to those who need it most while showing in a non-violent and indisputable way the complete unwillingness of our social institutions and political elite to serve those who make their empires possible. Food Not Bombs proves to everyone high and low that people can take care of themselves.

Now that's what I call a righteous idea!

Patricia Lyden is an outreach worker for the Coalition On Homelessness.

Walter Collins is an Irish poet and activist currently living in Chinatown.

BNM

QUESTION PERSON

by: J. Garth Ferguson
J. Michael Craft

QP: What do you think of those persons who serve food outside as opposed to those established food lines, i.e., St. Anthony's, Glide, etc.?

Andrew Haid: *Tenderloin Self Help Center Volunteer and Sixth Street resident.* They're cool. They could provide better food but they meet a need for the homeless that other regularly known food programs don't meet.

Cindy Davis: *Single mother of two children.* The people who serve food in the parks have every right to feed the poor. I do believe that their should be a certain minimum health code, but just because they aren't part of San Francisco's established poverty program they should not be harassed for their kind spirit.

QP: Do you believe the City's policies of harassing and citing those feeding outside is based on the theory of an out of sight out of mind approach to the problem?

Andrew Haid: I think the problem is that people who donate food to the food lines are easing their conscience and don't have to face their or their elective officials parts in solving the real problems of homelessness.

Cindy Davis: I'm not sure what you mean by "out of sight out of mind." I do believe there is some sort of unspoken policy by the City to stop those services that show that the City's policies are not working.

QP: What do you think of the politics of food in San Francisco?

Andrew Haid: It's a crime playing politics with people's basic needs; i.e., housing, food, etc. It is also criminally immoral to use basic survival needs of the disadvantaged to keep control over them.

Cindy Davis: Yes, there is politics in providing food for the poor and homeless. I think that this is a sin against God and humanity.

Linda Sanchez: I thought the problem of homelessness was solved. I guess the idea of out of sight out of mind really worked for me. I hope I will never forget the plight of homeless people just because they are hidden. Thank you and Food Not Bombs for reminding us of this.

Donna Willis: I think it is all full of shit. Everyone is using everyone else to prove their political point. If you idiots spent as much time trying to solve poverty as you do blaming each other then maybe we could get something solved.

Robert Willis: I really don't know much about the struggle about other groups feeding in the park. But I want to say this about Food Not Bombs and its problem with

the City. I think it is very hypocritical for Food Not Bombs to accuse the City of playing politics with food—harassing them and taking food away, when in my opinion they are playing the same game. If they really wanted to feed the poor, they could find ways of doing it without challenging the City to live up to its threats. This doesn't mean I don't support their right to feed the people.

Are they using food to feed the hungry, or, as their name implies, to end war? I hope some day the human right to feed the poor will be met and politics will find other ways to express itself. Again, this is just my opinion. I do think homelessness and hunger should be solved and not used as a way to end war or social control.

J. Garth Ferguson and J. Michael Craft are formerly homeless San Franciscans who currently live and work in the Tenderloin.

BEHIND THE COUNTER

One Worker's Viewpoint

S.K., St. Martin de Porres
(Name Withheld Upon Request)

Martin de Porres was a man who was half black and half Spanish from Peru and he did a whole bunch of work with poor people, hence the name Martin of the poor. He actually did a lot of work with hospitals also. Since he was a mixed breed it was a big deal

socially and politically that he became a priest.

Generally speaking, it seems there is not enough food to go around. The lines get longer and longer, especially in the last year or so. We've also been getting fewer volunteers so we've been under the gun, so to speak, with demand on the one hand and not enough help on the other.

We don't ask people why they come here. We all just know that we've been working a lot harder these past few months. There seems to be a growing problem with hunger. The money is just drying up. We serve breakfast five days a week, lunch five days a week and brunch two days a week. Soup for lunch and oatmeal and coffee and so on for breakfast and whatever else we get like fruit we'll put out. It really depends on what is available to us most of the time.

Most of the people using our services come from the Tenderloin and Potrero Hill districts.

I have not heard any of the people using our services complain about the food served by Food Not Bombs or other non-official groups. I don't know why Food Not Bombs is bothered. They offer essentially the same services as we do, or Glide or St. Anthony's, for that matter.

Food Not Bombs does advocacy as well as serve food and the city may not like that. That may be part of it. We just need more help wherever we can get it.

[SANYA from last page]

among so many others. The ministry I provide for disadvantaged laborers in Tokyo is my main source of information in describing my own perspective.

BNM: Then would you describe some of your experiences working with the poor people in Tokyo?

RYK: I would first very much like to give you a little general background about who I am and what I do. As I already mentioned, I'm a minister for the United Church of Christ in Japan and I also run a small restaurant in an area of Tokyo known as Sanya, which is demographically very much the same as the Tenderloin district here in San Francisco. What we try to provide at this restaurant is a place where people can get a good, healthy meal at cheap prices. Right now we're only serving one meal a day, at dinner time, to from eighty to ninety people every day, seven days a week.

BNM: Do you have to turn many people away when you run out of food? And if so, who are they and what other options for food and other forms of basic assistance do they have?

RYK: Sanya is an area made up mostly of daily casual laborers, nearly all of whom are young to middle-aged single men without families. We serve anyone who can pay for our meals, which are very cheap. I can't say we turn anyone away; we just have limited

space, and people who don't come obviously don't get served, so all I can really say is that we only serve a small number of the people who could use a reliable, cheap place to eat. These men don't have any sort of insurance or company benefits to fall back on if they get sick or hurt on the job. As most of them get older, into their fifties, they get weaker and can't keep up with many of the jobs that are available, which involve very heavy lifting and carrying, and so they get poorer and sicker and sometimes lose their rooms and have to live on the street.

BNM: What kind of things do these workers have happen to them once they are truly disabled?

RYK: When the middle-aged men start to slow down, they fill their time with a lot of drinking and eventually become seriously alcoholic and very ill from that. A few people receive some sort of welfare from the government, though the bureaucracy in charge of public assistance discriminates heavily against these day workers, and tries hard to bar them from entrance to the welfare system. So these people who have gotten into a bad situation have to more or less seek other kinds of help wherever they can find it; for instance, with us, at the low-cost meals program we run out of the restaurant and which receives no funding except at the door when a worker comes in to buy his bowl of ramen or fish or whatever we're serving that day.

BNM: Is this enough? Can these men actually meet basic needs in this way, year after year?

RYK: In the wintertime, from December into March, they can also get some clothing donations at the restaurant and maybe some extra food portions to take out with them on holidays. The biggest problem in this area is alcoholism, though things like unemployment and lack of shelter are also bad.

BNM: What kind of alcoholism are we talking about? Mostly heavy saki, beer and liquor drinking?

RYK: Mostly a drink called Sho-Chu, which is about 35% to 45% alcohol (about 80 proof in your terms), made from potatoes or barley and which is basically a very raw low-grade form of whiskey or vodka, depending on its base. Of course, other things like saki and bottled beer are drunk, but they usually cost too much for the people who live in Sanya to afford except on special occasions.

BNM: What kind of people end up in Sanya? What were their backgrounds before they moved there?

RYK: They come from a wide variety of backgrounds. People from the farms in rural areas chiefly, but also many people who worked in tiny factories that failed and left them without work, as well as smaller groups of retired veterans and older clerks whose shops closed down. Across all these categories are large numbers of people who have had personal difficulties that led to estrangement

[SANYA on next page]

[SANYA from last page]

from their families and which left them without any social support in our society, which as you know, is exceptionally family-oriented. Social disgrace is almost a guarantee of exclusion in Japan. The men who live in the Sanya really have no place else to go.

BNM: How about ethnic minorities or foreigners? Koreans? Filipinos? Indians? Any others?

RYK: There are people coming to do the same sorts of labor in Japan, but their recruitment method is a little different. The workers we've talked about in Sanya stand outside in the street in job lines and get picked up by employers as needed. The foreigners are hired by companies in different ways and we really don't see them much in Sanya district. About a year ago there were a lot of Canton Chinese who came and stood out on the street to get jobs with carpentry firms, but the union organization started cracking down and they've moved to elsewhere in the city to find work. The foreigners are very hard to track and are not very welcome in Japan generally. Unfortunately, we seem to have more than enough desperate workers to do that kind of labor for very little pay among our own people. Even though the turnover is high as men get too old to work, younger men always come to take their place. There seems to be no end in sight, either.

BNM: What about the people who don't fit in anywhere? Does

the government load them on boats to Singapore, or what? Are there homeless people begging in the tourist areas of Tokyo?

RYK: On the weekends, there are a few temporary shelters opened for two nights only. At the end of the year, for the two weeks before New Year's Day, they put together quonset-hut type warehouses where the homeless people can stay until after the holiday season has ended. There are Christian groups and groups like Alcoholics Anonymous who have come together and are trying to do something about this, but it's very difficult. It's a very serious problem, and that's why they're helping send people like myself here and to other places to get some ideas and attend workshops on alcoholism which I can adapt to eventually use as the model for my own local program in Sanya.

BNM: Since it keeps coming up; how many alcoholics are in Japan, according to present estimates?

RYK: In all of Japan there are easily over two million active alcoholics in a total population of 125 million. Among the homeless, these numbers are very hard to estimate, though among those I see where I work, easily more than half can be described as severely alcoholic. Other drugs have not really become a big problem yet, except for opium and very restricted cocaine use in the immigrant communities. It does seem that cocaine is becoming more popular in the youth mainstream, and amphetamines have been a

problem across the board for a long time now, say since the late 1950's.

BNM: How about mental illness? Do people with mental illnesses end up on the street like they do here in America?

RYK: It's hard to say. Yes, I've seen some clearly mentally disturbed people on the streets, and I've been told that mental institutions are overcrowded, but I can't say that there's been any deliberate policy of dumping them in the slum districts to save money.

One thing that I think happens more in America than Japan is the impulse for Americans to label their homeless in some negative but fairly non-specific way, for instance by dismissing them as "crazy people," in order to minimize the broader social problem of failing to account for how the mainstream came to reject such people in the first place. In Japan, the problem is just as shameful, but for us the impulse is more often to automatically deny and ignore the desperate situation our society leaves unwanted workers in once they have outlived their usefulness to their employers.

Both approaches avoid reality and do nothing to relieve the situation, but try to convince self-advertised "normal" people that they're no different from the outcasts they fear and despise so much, and you make enemies fast. I hope to see a more compassionate outlook regarding our poor people develop soon, but until then I can only wait and keep on doing what I've done for them up to now.

BNM: Now that mainstream attitudes have been mentioned; what would you describe the overall media handling of homeless coverage as, and what slant does the government take toward this issue?

RYK: Where the media is concerned, it's purely sensationalistic. Recently, in another district of the city, a group of labor organizers and police officers were indicted for giving and receiving bribes and conniving with members of the Yakuza (the Japanese Mafia) to protect and profit-share in the lucrative rackets the mobsters operated and the police protected which exploited the lower-class labor pool the unions represented. Now, many of the workers associated with these unions from our district participate actively in the gambling establishments run by this combination of officials and gangsters and lose much of what little they have in the process, but the newspapers and other media only cover the high-profile end of things by running features on the Yakuza gang lords and corrupt City Commissioners and overlook the human impact this racketeering has had on the street level. Basically, the victims aren't considered, and by implication they're blamed for exercising the only entertainment options which are provided to them in the slum neighborhoods where they have to live.

During this particular situation, though, the story became complicated when some of the laborers who resented having their union money spent on bribes to the

police started a riot, which escalated after three or four days, when young people from other districts of Tokyo got involved and a railway station was burned and a supermarket was wrecked and the Army had to intervene to restore order. After this point, the news coverage totally ignored the fact that the whole situation stemmed from the exploitation of local workers whose protests set the events in motion. It was as if the media wanted to glamorize the situation into another Tiananmen Square type of thing, which it wasn't, but never mind. Stories of police harassment of marginal workers angered at union abuses of their due payments leading to street violence didn't sell as much advertising time as images of rampaging teen-aged suburbanites and college protestors on the evening news. As usual, the rape of the poor was ignored.

BNM: Media "coverage" aside, do you believe that homelessness is currently increasing in Japan?

RYK: Yes, but I must qualify this by saying the process is taking place very slowly and very selectively. Japan's economy is still very much a growth economy, and due to the peculiarities of our internal goods and services delivery system, many people who might otherwise be "downsized" in a Western business organization continue to play an active role in our national economy. Consequently, and in conjunction with the generally high level of public education and job skills training we enjoy, the population of Japan as a whole is much better equipped

to find and retain full-time employment where they live than comparable work forces from nearly any other economic system operating in the contemporary international marketplace.

Nevertheless, there are signs that the holes in our social and economic fabric are widening. It's more obvious, of course, in an area like Sanya, where people end up when there's no place left to hide. I see it particularly in the numbers of middle-aged men who clearly have not had to live in poverty before in their lives who are coming into the area now.

These individuals are particularly prone to alcohol abuse and despair, because they never dreamt in their worst nightmares that they could end up in Sanya with all the other outcasts. The identity crisis these men experience is particularly acute, and at present there are literally no counseling or diversion and retraining programs available to them, and none are even in the works.

Once again, I must qualify this statement, because I am not familiar with all of the government assistance bureaucracies in place even in the metro Tokyo area, but it is apparent to any of us who work in Sanya that these newcomers have been abandoned as totally as the men who settled here as teenagers after World War II. None of them ever got back into the mainstream either.

BNM: What kind of housing is available to these men at this time? Is it stable or affordable?

[SANYA on next page]

RYK: Rooming houses, mostly, rented by the night or the week. Until recently, the wages received for a day's work were adequate for rent, food and, let's face it, drink, but recent increases in real estate values in Tokyo and corresponding hikes in property taxes have blown the ceiling right off the housing market, even in an area as underdeveloped and poorly-maintained as Sanya. This is a bad time to rent anything anywhere in the city, and if you're looking for the one primary economic factor that may drive a lot more people into full-time homeless here in Tokyo, this is it.

High rent combined with a reduced need for casual day laborers and an increased pool of these workers to choose from make for a potentially explosive situation in Tokyo (and it could become even worse in relatively more gridlocked high-rise cities like Kyoto and Osaka) over the next ten to fifteen years. I think even the government might make some kind of half-hearted attempt in the meantime to address this problem before they shove it under the carpet and call in the Army again.

Pardon me; it isn't funny, and I shouldn't be joking about it.

BNM: Don't worry about it. For those who are already homeless, where do they sleep?

RYK: There's a public park and a shopping arcade with a covered walkway that serves as shelter for many homeless people at the present time. The police regularly go through these areas and clear

the homeless people out, though, so there are no semi-permanent 'campground' sites for groups of homeless people developing in the city yet, though that may change. Sometimes sleeping homeless people are awakened by the beatings of junior-high school kids with baseball bats, who are doing it just for "fun." In the last couple of years there have been several fatalities from this cause alone, though many more simply die of exposure or pneumonia, especially during the cold season.

BNM: What kinds of health care, if any, are available to homeless people in Tokyo at this time?

RYK: Next to none, at least on the government or local levels. Certain church and charitable organizations offer limited clinical care and health-fair types of medical assistance on an erratic basis, as month-to-month funding permits. For acute care, the only service available comes after an individual actually collapses on the street and someone calls the ambulance to haul the person to the public hospital, where minimal treatment is rendered until the patient stabilizes or dies. For the patient whose condition is complicated by problems based in alcohol or drug addictions, no specific help is available anywhere except in Alcoholics Anonymous or private counseling by religious workers and private community-based social work volunteers.

I really want to develop more self-help model programs for the people I work with, because after many years of hoping that

official interest in the alcohol and drug problems which affect most of the residents in the Sanya district would eventually develop, I see now that it's going to be pretty much up to us to change the situation on our own initiative.

Maybe that's for the best. Still, help from any concerned source will be welcome anytime. Thanks for giving me a chance to explain the situation in Sanya to you and your American readers.

Reverend Yuzuru Kikuchi is a minister for the United Church of Christ in Tokyo. Jeff Hester is a Berkeley anthropologist who served as a translator for this piece.

GAIN
'91-'92, San Francisco Update.

"While new jobs will generate employment opportunities locally, openings resulting from replacement needs will be a much larger source: some 200,000-plus openings are expected to occur in San Francisco over the next two years due to people leaving the labor force and changing occupations. This will amount to over ten times the number of new jobs created in the same period. Clerical and service workers will experience the most numerous replacement openings.

"The problem is clear but exceedingly complex. At a time when when even more skilled workers are needed and the number of young people is declining, students are graduating from high school with less and less ability to function in the workplace — if they graduate at all. It is estimated

that by 1995, 14 million Americans will be unprepared for the jobs that are available.

"The relationship of education to work cannot be minimized. Looking onward from 1986 to the year 2000, the number of service-producing jobs will increase approximately 25%. However, the U.S. workforce will have grown only 15%. This disparity is further complicated by the fact that a growing proportion of new jobs will require higher-level skills — and those without basic skills will become frustrated, confused, and, more than likely, unemployable. What business needs versus what applicants are capable of doing are quickly becoming worlds apart."

GAIN, Greater Avenues To Independence, shows by its own analysis that the program it designed to make people more employable has to admit defeat, at least in San Francisco. The foregoing quotation is from page 16 of their yearly summary of program activities.

POVERTY IN THE 1990'S

Statistics from the Urban Institute, Harvard University, the University of Michigan, the Children's Defense Fund and the US Census Bureau.

Although economists working for the government proclaim that the recession has ended and basic conditions of life for most Americans are slowly but steadily improving, documentation by independent analysts flatly contradict the Administration's "optimis-

tic" findings. Report after report indicates a continuing decline in real income for all but the richest fifth of Americans since the beginning of the Reagan era with no end in sight. During the decade to come, prospects seem no cheerier. Conditions of decline seem likely to aggravate through the 1990's, leaving a legacy of poverty for generations of Americans who will have to live with what the politicians of this period enacted on behalf of their corporate patrons at our expense. Let the figures speak for themselves!

*In 1988, only ten states (most of them in the New England region) had less than 10% of their population living under the official poverty line.

*Only seven northern states had fewer than 12% of their populations living under the poverty line.

*Seventeen widely scattered states had roughly 15% of their residents living below the poverty line.

*Nine states in the Midwest and South had levels as high as 20% of their populations living below the poverty line.

*The poorest six states, mostly in the deep South, had as much as 30% of their populations living in poverty.

Job opportunities for male high school graduates have lost ground since the recession of 1973. In terms of 1987 dollars, the percentage of male workers aged 25-54 earning less than \$12,000 yearly increased by the following amounts: for white males, from 6% to 16%; for Hispanic males, from 13% to 27%; for African-

American males, from 16% to 37%; and for males of Asian origin, though no firm figures are available, estimates run slightly higher (from 9% to 18%) than those for Hispanics due to language barriers and cultural differences. These figures do not account for the temporary or seasonal labor markets, two significant sources of employment in our economy.

By fifths, America's households receive the following amounts of average annual income (in 1989 dollars):

*The richest fifth receives 47% of all income (or an average of \$85,500).

*The next richest fifth receives 24% of all income (or an average of \$43,800).

*The middle fifth receives 16% of all income (or an average of \$29,000).

*The next poorest fifth receives 9% of all income (or an average of \$17,500).

*The poorest fifth receives only 4% of all income (or an average of \$7,000).

Finally, children suffer the most from the conditions of poverty today. In 1973, the total for all Americans living under the official poverty line was 11%, for children, it was 14%. By 1989, figures for both categories had risen; for adults, it was 13%; for children, it was 20%. All indicators point to an indefinite continuation of this trend. Projections for the year 2000, based on current increases, tabulate the adult level at 15% in chronic poverty, with children at or above the 25% mark.

How lucky for them that the recession ended back in 1991!

FEEDBACK

Letters To The Editor

Editor,

By *NQ* MEANS June issue ("What It Is") is the finest edition of your paper to be released in recent months. Among the many excellent articles, the narrative by the Salvadoreno refugee who finally escaped to San Francisco was particularly compelling. It seems likely that our government will continue supporting police states in Central America and eventually escalate to further outright interventions there before the turn of the century, along the lines taken during its invasions of Grenada and Panama, or worse.

As a native of Belfast, I know what it's like to live in a police state, and I left that place to distance myself from the official mutilation of an entire nation which throughout my youth I wrongly assumed to be a sort of monstrosity exclusive to hired thugs of the Guarda and the military police acting on behalf of the British occupiers.

What I see being done in America to homeless people and minorities who were unlucky enough to be born in poverty here is no different, except that there is as yet no organized popular resistance to government oppression of

the citizenry which approximates the conditions of "equal opportunity" terrorism I fled from in Northern Ireland during the '70's.

We'll have the same sorry mess on our hands here in a few years, except that our government also feels duty bound to sponsor the type of international terrorism inflicted upon unfortunate locals by sclerotic elites in Latin client dictatorships which North America supports. This may impede a total crackdown on "undesirables" here in the States for a little longer, but it's already well underway, mark my words.

The lickspittle news establishment in this country takes the prize over even the doltish earnest "moderates" of the Irish press who toe the British propaganda line for the dailies of my homeland. Now, this is nothing for the American press to be proud of, but the fact that a paper like *By NQ* MEANS can still be published here gives me cause for a little hope. It just needs to reach more people — and there's the rub.

When hundreds of millions of advertising dollars are spent to glorify lifestyles which a steadily decreasing percentage of the population can afford to indulge in, why should a paper as worthwhile as *By NQ* MEANS, whose demystifications of the prevailing social fantasy gives people a chance to focus on genuine needs and practicable goals in the communities where they actually live, have to wait in the wings for support that will bring it to the audiences who need it most — the harassed middle class on the brink of disaster and the chronically

impoverished subgroups cast out by previous spells of "economic growth and realignment" in this land?

The question isn't entirely rhetorical. Don't the rulers of this country understand that once all their livestock has been slaughtered, they'll have to start again from scratch? If they aren't slaughtered too? Maybe sharing out a little something for everybody right now will minimize the carnage when hard times come for all of us again, as they no doubt will. Meantime, give the Devil his due, and see to it that *By NQ* MEANS gets to keep doing what it does best, which is reminding us that we're only human and everyone needs to give all the help they can to one other while here below.

When ordinary people are able to stay abreast of events which concern them directly, without having to rely on the reprocessed pap which passes as news in the American press, we'll have that much more of a chance to protect ourselves when the upper classes and their trained apes begin preparing for another assault on the commons. They sometimes forget that we also know how to read — more fool them.

Forewarned is forearmed, and *By NQ* MEANS is still the best independent source for relevant news and up-to-date analysis of human rights issues and the cause of popular justice I've seen since coming to San Francisco as a refugee long ago.

Come what may, lads, keep the faith, and thanks for the feast!

—Tom Billington

many of them have suffered at the hands of the government. People are put in jail for their political beliefs.

You know, we all came from someplace unless we are Native American and then the land was stolen from us. My grandfather came here fleeing the potato famine in Ireland and several members of his family died. This story has been handed down to us on a gold platter. How he struggled in New York and this is held up as an ideal how hard he struggled, having to provide for his family and look how well his grandchildren are doing. I don't think it should stop with his grandchildren. If people make it to this country then we better damn well make sure they can survive. And their children are being born here and that is real scary. These children are being born here and we're not even providing them with the most basic needs. I'm thinking of running water and a toilet and enough to eat and heated dwelling places.

I understand we don't do that for our own citizens, but I don't think we should say tough. I think any child born in this country, no matter whether the parents are fresh off the boat or not, has a right to a decent life.

What we're trying to get the city to do is to become more bilingual. Things like San Francisco Housing Authority—I got the figures the other day and out of 6,500 residents in the projects only 500 are Latino and only nine percent of the total are Latino in a city that has over a hundred thousand living here. So you would imagine, what, eighty thousand are on

poor or moderate income? Well, everything is in English at the Housing Authority. From the first telephone call to set up an appointment. There is no response whatever. I mean nothing for non-English-speaking people. And this is federal program which on a local level is a patronage program. What would you think if there is a federal program because everything was in a language you couldn't read or speak, but you represented a substantial ethnic group?

Mary Ann Angus works at Catholic Charities. This letter was a response to our "Shadows Of Home," August issue.

Editor,

In discussing some of the problems faced by low-income Latinos you first have to understand that the people are not only Mexican. The homeless people in Latin America are from all the other Hispanic countries, they are from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and the Peruvians are from South America.

The problems they are facing are mono-lingual. In talking about just three different communities, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, Mexicano, I can tell you there is a difference between them. They speak the same language but they have different problems. Mexicans came to escape the poverty of Mexico. Salvadorans and Guatemalans are homeless because of the war and political oppression. People are coming not just to

change their economic status but to save their lives.

The biggest problem they have is they don't speak English. They don't have documents. Some because of what they have been through have emotional problems or mental health problems. Their basic needs are not covered like food, shelter and clothing. They are thinking every day to survive so consequently they do not have very stable mental health. Not if they are thinking how to survive the next day.

They don't have families here, they don't know the language, they don't have a job, no money. Many re-experience the trauma they experienced in Central America because of the hardships they face here. Since the immigration law was passed in 1986, employers have to ask for papers. The people can not work under the table any more. Without money for rent we see more homeless.

We were in a meeting last year with Supervisor Gonzales trying to discuss with the city to alleviate the problem. One of the things we were thinking was to have some kind of cooperative program where somebody could support them. Something like setting people up with housing cleaning jobs. There are a lot of creative things we can do beyond just shelter. So far services are minimal to nonexistent.

Teresa Mejia works at San Francisco General Hospital. This letter was also a response to "Shadows of Home," August issue.

[ESGUERRA from last page]

welfare recipient after all. And I know the attitude is there. It's there. And you know, people may argue that it's a chip on A.F.D.C.'s shoulder. You know what I mean? You're always suspected of being this low-life criminal type who's always going to try to get over even if you ask for things you're entitled to. Like homeless assistance.

BNM: We were talking to a S.I.U. investigator up in Tehama County. He was saying that one out of four recipients are guilty of fraud.

C.E.: What is fraud?

BNM: They believe it's a way of getting over on the system.

C.E.: But hey, what is fraud, first of all? Is it a crime is it a fraud to have to work under the table? So you can feed your kid, so you can keep your rent paid, so you don't wind up on the street? You know, having a kid that grows up like that, he's probably going to grow up to be some kind of criminal caught up in the system. Yes, and then it's going to cost the state and the government more.

BNM: Do you believe that's the attitude of all S.I.U. agents?

C.E.: Yes, S.I.U. specifically? Yes! Everybody's guilty until proven innocent.

BNM: What are the recipients doing to get investigated and, do you feel that some of these investigations are unwarranted? Are they still saying things like there are men's clothing in the closet?

C.E.: F.R.E.D.? Absolutely, they are still saying things like there is men's clothing in the closet. Yes, that's suspicion for denying a person benefits. If there is evidence

showing an adult male living there. You know, who is that adult male? Could it be a roommate that you don't want them to know about? Could it be her husband? It could be, but is that the baby's father? Is it your husband? Is it somebody who escaped from El Salvador with their life on their back? You know what I mean?

BNM: Right.

C.E.: And these recipients don't want to tell. I mean there could be various reasons why there are men's clothes. I may wear men's clothes. There are lots of them in my closet. Maybe my Mom wears Army boots; stores them in there. Whatever. I think you see what I'm getting at. But anyway, yeah, people are being discontinued because of that. I mean I could go as far as to say that eventually.

BNM: Okay, the last question is for you to describe treatment attitude toward recipients, but I'm pretty sure we've already covered that.

C.E.: No, let me tell you, S.I.U. is a whole different ball game from F.R.E.D. S.I.U. is a bunch of peace officers who, quote-unquote can bear fire-arms. It's a choice, but they all do. They all carry guns. The way they do the investigation is much more...

BNM: Intimidating?

C.E.: No, not necessarily. In fact, it might be less. It's much more conniving; it's much more stealthy, it's really reticent. It's ugly. I mean, because the investigator I saw investigating this client; the scenario was, well, it came from when I talked to him before. He thought she had a job from the time before because he didn't know how she

got paid because it seems they couldn't find any cash income that she was making. She wasn't making any cash income. She was in a training program of some sort.

Anyway, there was also another question about how many children she had. Whether she had eligible children. Well, when me, the client and her two children went to the S.I.U. office, he said, "Oh, hi little girl. What's your name?" And, I don't know, that struck me as odd. I don't like cops. I mean, just being poor, and growing up, and being a minority (I'm a Filipina), I don't like cops, and I have a sixth sense about them.

And when he asked that to the little girl, you know, "hi, what's your name", I'm thinking, "hey, wait a second, who cares?" And then he went on to talk to her after she gave the name, and as he was talking he started writing things down. And then he asked the other little girl, "Oh, what's your name?" And, you know, the client was kind of caught off guard because, after that incident and then during the rest of the investigation she said, "oh, he was pretty nice." I said, "no, he wasn't, he was checking to see if you had your kids with you. He was asking the kids what their names were." You know what I mean? So, that's S.I.U. You know, they say "we want to be here to help you, and we just want to prove that the welfare regulations have been followed accordingly."

Bullshit!! Bullshit!! Bullshit!! You know? They're conniving. And because they have the capacity of referring a case, a quote, unquote welfare fraud case

over for criminal prosecution, they're very dangerous.

BNM: OK. Do you see any future happenings in stopping F.R.E.D. or improving F.R.E.D.?

C.E.: I would like to eliminate F.R.E.D. altogether. The whole idea of a unit being set up specifically to, quote-unquote, verify information and then they don't follow the rules... that, no, there's something very wrong with that. When you set out an army against people who need help. And you expend that much money on a little army to verify shit that these people who need help tell them.

BNM: Is there anything in the plans right now to improve it?

C.E.: Are there any plans to improve it? At this point, me personally and I'm not speaking for anyone else, I don't see any room for improvement as far as us going up there and us meeting the F.R.E.D. Advisory Committee. Going up there and talking our heads off to a wall. You know? I would just say, eliminate the program. Eliminate the program altogether. You know, they're our rules, we all helped put them together; they're not being followed. And if they can't do that, then why have them?

BNM: So are there any plans to have them discontinued by any supervisory state-level organization? Will grassroots advocacy efforts like yours help in changing the ground rules for welfare fraud?

C.E.: F.R.E.D. was supposed to be run under a set of guidelines that was monitored by the Board of Supervisors. Since they're not doing it, it should be eliminated.

FRAUD INVESTIGATOR

*An Account by
Wayne Gunther,
Tehama County,
California*

I got a call from a private attorney who was representing Shelly Rainer. Her personal attorney. Apparently, the welfare fraud unit had arrested Shelly Rainer and put her in jail for welfare fraud. Her attorney calls me and says I want to hire you and investigate this case for the defense because I know there is something wrong with it and I don't think she did this. I investigated the thing and determined that they had screwed up from start to finish. This woman had done nothing wrong.

What happened was she did what they said she had done but the regulations said she could do it. She had not violated the law, it appeared that she had but nobody bothered to check the regulations. They ran with it and put her in jail.

Anyway, I investigated the thing, I looked at all the regulations, I wrote a good report. I cited a bunch of case law to the attorney. He goes and sits down with the DA and the welfare department and says look, here is what my guy who used to be your head investigator tells me and he says you're all wet here.

They dismissed the charges against her. They said you don't owe us that \$5,000.00. We

in fact owe you \$2,200 more. They ended up dropping all the charges and paying her all the money due her. Now I understand her attorney has filed a claim against the county for false arrest.

I'll tell you this. Since I have gotten my private investigators license I have investigated four cases of welfare fraud for various attorneys where that sort of thing has happened. I have determined none of these people should have been charged with any crime and they in fact have had the charges against them dismissed. Now that is four different instances. I attribute these errors to the fact that they are overwhelmed with cases. I think the idea often is, we'll write it, submit it and if the DA agrees and charges it maybe they'll bargain it down and plead guilty and go about their business and I'll never hear any more about it. That happens a lot.

Once in a while you get a defendant or defense attorney who gets stubborn about it and says hey, I didn't do anything wrong and hire somebody like myself who has done that same work within the system and knows how the system operates then you sit down and start tearing their case apart and find the mistakes if there are any; people say, hey, I told you so; I didn't do it.

I really think most of these problems stem from work overload. Workers are just trying to hold the line.

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE DISBANDED

Community Claims Agreements Violated By Department Of Social Services

Julia Velson

Homeless Advocacy Project

Basically we feel, there's a couple of things, the simplest way to say it is that we feel that the changes that we negotiated within the committee are simply not being implemented at the front line, and continuing to prepare for these meetings is very time consuming for all of us and we feel that we have to take our struggle to a different level at this point. We are going to ask to meet directly with Julia Lopez [D.S.S.] and discuss our concerns about actually implementing the changes at the front line and training workers appropriately. We know that there was a so-called training. We have heard from sources inside D.S.S. that it was not a very effective training. We want to meet with Julia and see what comes out of it. I think that for in order for the committee, and the committee as a whole has not discussed this, but I think for the Oversight Committee to keep meeting, that we need to have some reassurances, some guarantees, from Julia Lopez about implementing this program and perhaps some hand in participating in the training, we have to have some way of insuring that the changes that the Department has agreed to will in fact be implemented. I believe that we were going to request the meeting with Julia within the next

two weeks, but I don't know that the meeting will actually be held within the next two weeks.

Bob Capistrano

San Francisco Neighborhood
Legal Rights Foundation

I would say it is because the Department of Social Services was not following through with their commitment to provide adequate training to the eligibility workers. The eligibility workers were not following through with the County's obligation to first clarify with the client whether or not there was a misunderstanding before referring the client to FRED, and both the FRED workers and the eligibility workers who had apparently been taking referrals were on the edges or outside the referral criteria that the community and the Department had agreed upon. The Oversight Committee will have to evaluate whether to continue to meet depending upon the Department's reaction to the points we brought up.

Michael Hancock

Department of Social Services

I find it unfortunate that the community will not meet with us. We had a very good process in motion and I'm dissatisfied we can't move further with it. My understanding is that the representatives want to meet with the General Manager and the Social Services Commission to discuss the matter of no confidence. From there I'm not sure what will happen.

ACCUSED OF FRAUD

One Latina's Story

by: Judy Blochowiak

Mary is a 57 year old Salvadorean woman. Mary applied for General Assistance and signed form 8072 Interpretation Services Cover Sheet requesting a translator and forms in Spanish. She was never given a translator, a Spanish speaking worker, or forms in Spanish. Mary requested that when she did her workfare that she could learn a skill that would help her find a job.

She did her workfare at the V.A. Hospital and learned how to take blood from clients and how to perform simple lab tests. Mary continued to do her workfare, but found a job using the skills in which she learned at the V.A. Hospital. She went on like this for a long time; she worked at the V.A. for her workfare, collected a G.A. check, and worked part time so that she could send money home to her family in El Salvador. Mary did not understand that she had to report her income to General Assistance; she thought that by staying at the V.A. Hospital she was earning her welfare check.

It was then discovered through an I.E.V.S. report that she was earning money. She was notified by S.I.U. and was brought in for an appointment. In this appointment, her S.I.U. worker wrote

[HAMILTON from last page]

and then creating an incentive for us to raise private money so that up to a ceiling they would match fifty cents to the dollar all new private monies that we raised. There were a lot of points we differed on that, but that is where in the end we settled it.

Really though, to get the attention of the DSS we did a news conference in November. Their position was you guys fucked up, what did you do wrong that you're out of money. Our position was what the City is expecting us to do with the burden of taking care of the people the city is not taking care of is so much and so expensive that the City should fund us.

So we had this press conference in which we stated that we would close unless we received increased public support. And we put the responsibility for that in the lap of the City.

What was confusing to us when we first got into trouble was that we needed to start fundraising naturally. That was the problem. Everybody wanted us to develop a new accounting system. We didn't have time for that. We were going into the peak holiday season where we knew the demand for our services would increase, so we were very resentful of the fact that the DSS sent an auditor down. We were able to convince him that it was not the appropriate time. That once we were through with the emergency fine, we understand that

people want to know how their money is spent. That is normal. We were able to get them to back down on that and actually when the auditor came in at a better time for us he proved to be a great deal of assistance.

When we went into crisis it was due to the fact that our income was too low for what we were trying to do. We were trying to provide meals, heat, shelter to families. Suddenly, the microscope was on us and we were made to feel guilty because we broke. I felt "fredded" as in the F.R.E.D. program. That is I think what happens to the families we serve. We felt we were being investigated instead of supported, instead of saying, hey, wait a minute. What they're doing is important work. It's expensive, but it's a bargain for the City. What happened was we were put on the defensive for quite awhile. And it felt like, hearing about FRED investigations from some of our clients, it felt like that. The Mayor's Office sent a financial analyst and he sent an auditor and we said, hey, send fundraisers. That's what we needed.

We could really appreciate the way some of our folks feel when they have to deal with FRED or power groups in general. You know, on AFDC people do not receive what they need to live on. And then when they run out of money they are investigated, which is what happened to us.

Dick Clark was acting director for Hamilton Shelter, and now works at St. Anthony's Foundation

The New Family Multi-Service Center

What Does It Really Offer?

by: J. Walter Carson
J. Malcolm Garcia
By *Na* MEANS Editors

IF YOU WERE HOMELESS AND GIVEN A CHOICE, which of these two options would you prefer—an agency that blames the victim or an agency that suffocates the victim through kindness? Like All State Insurance, you're in good hands with Catholic Charities and the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Their Richmond Hills Manor—Family Residence offers both approaches.

The name "Richmond Hills Manor—Family Residence" gives us a clue to the attitudes these agencies hold toward families without homes. Admittedly, such a name can ease fears in a neighborhood that does not understand homelessness. It is a name that can slide easily into a community without attracting too much attention. Unfortunately, Richmond Hills Manor—Family Residence also suggests a golf club in a well-to-do white neighborhood. Spats. White pants. Caddies. The works, with margaritas to go.

In other words, folks just like us, right?

Well, that's exactly what the Richmond Neighborhood Advisory Committee wanted to hear. Comments such as, "They will learn from us...not that we're bet-

ter than them," "People who live there will live up to our example," "Are we talking about perverts here, the lowest of the low from San Quentin?" "We'll make coloring books for the children to show them how to pick up litter," "What terrible people are we talking about? What dreadful things can they do to us?" all indicate a willingness by them to use prejudice against homeless people to perpetuate local fears. This also provided an opportunity for the reactionary backwash to flood over the Asian residents (referred to as "those Orientals") as well. Neither of the provider representatives present attempted to address the blatant racism or anti-homeless paranoia indulged in throughout the meeting.

BUT NOT TO WORRY.

The residents of the Richmond District will not be exposed to any such boogie men. According to Laudres Martinez of Catholic Charities, "The derelicts you see on Geary Street are not the families coming in."

Yet how is that value judgment to be determined? What screening mechanism will be in place to weed out the "derelicts" from "truly deserving" poor people? Is this institutional or community prejudice?

Well, let's see. It appears it's going to be community prejudice supported and fed through misinformation by the service providers. According to the St. Vincent de Paul Society, "We do indeed understand the fear homeless people invoke in homeowners, renters, and business people...we

want to design ways we can address those concerns."

How? By not challenging the outrageous remarks adumbrated above? By encouraging the social bigotry and ignorance these statements represent when a service provider attempts to ease concerns with reassurances that the "derelicts" on Geary Street won't be admitted? Clearly, the provider's lack of initiative with regard to these issues settles them by default.

Some of my best friends are black too.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

claimed that through its Job Bank, families would be provided jobs. However, according to projections by members of the San Francisco Job Alliance, the job market for skilled and semi-skilled labor locally will be shrinking as the tendencies toward tighter staffing policies and higher tech work stations continues. The people these two service agencies hope to provide employment for will be further marginalized by this trend. Recent statistics indicate that for every one percent increase in unemployment there is a corresponding eleven percent increase in homelessness.

How do you like them odds, neighbor?

No amount of wishful thinking and unconscious discrimination against financially disadvantaged families will change the fact that homelessness is not the result of bad planning or bad character on the part of individuals or families themselves. Moreover, people who presently enjoy some

measure of economic security can't, on the basis of current solvency, be certain they will never become homeless themselves.

Line forms to the left, folks.

Social Service agencies which encourage false hopes and social bigotry among many well-meaning but uninformed Richmond neighborhood residents in order to preserve their contracts and their own delusions of adequacy are as much a part of the problem as the "derelicts" who must endure their counsel.

ONE HAND DIRTIES THE OTHER. (Shall we give them a service manual and crayons to illustrate how to do this? No, you're right—that's expecting too much of *their* kind).

At its best, which in real terms is reduced expectations, this program will be one of condescending charity and at its worst one of benign bigotry.

THE ROSE

by Bryan Lyden

*The rose so sweet,
but
Bitter to the
picker's hand,
Never taken live.*

Bryan Lyden is a musician and artist working in the Seattle area. He is the son of staff person J. Patricia Lyden.

I understand that what happens when you allege that you're sick is that they send you to their own doctor within the DSS, right? Well, they never did that in this case. They have the duty I believe according to the General Assistance procedures that if you're too sick to work they refer you to a GA doctor. They never bothered to do this, probably because of the bureaucracy. They let it go, let it all go, until finally they put their foot down and said by the way we need this letter and they got the letter and at some point they determined that the doctor was operating without a license.

So, then what they did was say go get supplemental documentation and my client went to a second doctor who also confirmed he was sick and then he got his lab test. The second doctor is also allegedly not a licensed physician. So, it's a bit of a sticky wicket but my defense is that my guy had a right to rely on this guy who originally diagnosed it. And even if he is not a licensed doctor the reality is that he is HIV positive. He is already eligible for GA and he has committed no fraud. Period.

I'm not sure what your story angle is. Part of it certainly should be that they have treated these guys harshly right off the bat by charging it as a felony instead of as a misdemeanor. So there was a sort of political thing going on. They just cut him off.

They were very precipitous and they made a very snap judgement. I don't think they did

any kind of investigation because had they subpoenaed the records of the lab they would have found out that in fact the lab had done the test and that my client was HIV positive. And now the whole house of cards is unravelling and I don't think they have a case against my guy and I think they know that.

What I find is, because you are dealing with these enormous bureaucracies, that if you really do look carefully at what you have, very often mistakes have been made. In fact, the overpayment is significantly less than what is being charged or a payment didn't occur at all. That sort of thing. It is a nightmare of scrutiny. What that says about the big picture is that it is pretty cold out there. People are making mistakes and they are dealing with policies instead of the human reality of poverty.

I just saw some statistics. The case load for felonies has just gone up. We have been moving up in terms of the number of cases going up to superior court. Our staff is down because of the budget cuts and the freeze on hiring. We're doing more cases with less people.

I think it is absurd, this push of cutting social programs and building more jails and hiring more cops. About the only thing working for defendants right now in the system is the fact there are not enough jails for the numbers of people society wants to put away.

So, everybody serves about half of the original sentence given

to them, which is beneficial when you consider that people are receiving sentences way out of proportion to what the charges are. All of which is a much more complicated scenario of the community not being part of the criminal justice system, not understanding the system and still demanding that we get tough on crime. So they go on creating longer sentences, creating determinant sentences which leaves the judge with no discretion; they're creating lots of priorable type of sentences where if you have this charge it's an automatic five year sentence.

What you have more and more are longer jail sentences for what really, if you look at the actual conduct, are not justified. That is a problem that is not being addressed because the community is not fully aware what it costs, what the trade-offs are to incarcerate somebody. It costs \$24,000.00 a year to keep someone in the state prison system and that doesn't include all the personnel, administration, housing, and food. What you could do with \$24,000.00 on the outside is a lot better than that.

My guys are destitute, uneducated, they are trying to survive in a system in which there really is no end, so their conduct is labelled criminal when it is actually just survival. It may be the product of delusions, dementia, drugs and various other things but those problems are not being addressed by incarceration.

Jean Amabile is an attorney for the S.F. Public Defender's Office.

JAIL REFORM POLICIES

The Absence Of Choices

by: Mark Mauer
The Sentencing Project
Washington, D.C.

The Sentencing Project is a non-profit organization that is devoted to criminal justice reform. We help to develop alternative sentencing programs and we do research and advocacy on issues of crime and punishment. We started in 1986 in Washington, D.C. This Project actually grew out of another organization, the National Legal Aid and Defender Association. It came out of a pilot project they had organized to develop some alternative sentencing program models to serve indigent defendants. The desire was to see if they were appropriate models for that group of clients to keep some offenders out of prison. The pilot project was by and large successful and so it then went on to form an organization devoted to spreading that concept and developing a greater variety of programs.

A study we released in January found that the United States has the highest recorded rate of incarceration in the world, greater than that of any other country. Ten years ago we were number three in the world, behind South Africa and the Soviet Union. In the past decade we have surpassed those two countries and have become the world leader in the proportion of people in prison.

We also looked at the situation of black males in this country and we found that black males are incarcerated at a rate four times that of black males in South Africa. We believe the reason for this lies in crime rates and criminal justice policies.

If you look at crime rates, particularly assaultive crimes, violent crimes which are more likely to lead to a prison sentence, then the United States does have higher rates of crime for these offenses than many countries. This provides a part of the explanation.

What we have also seen since 1980 is that there have been no dramatic changes in crime for that period but at the same time we have had a doubling of the inmate population in the country. We ascribe that to changes in criminal justice policies. The system has gotten much harsher; the so-called "get tough" movement which you can see in the use of mandatory sentencing, tougher sentencing, longer sentencing, cutbacks in parole and "good time." In general, more police, more prosecutors, more prisons, all resulting in more people being caught up in the system in greater numbers without much relevance to the crime rate in terms of that increase.

It is a question of where the impetus comes from. Political leaders will say the people demand this. They want us to do something about crime and will support this. I think a lot of the burden is on the political leaders. My reading of the public mood is

not so much that people want to build more prisons and lock people up, but that people want to do something about crime. The problem is that the only choice that politicians normally give them is to build more prisons or just to keep enduring the status quo.

I think if we offered people a choice of we could build more prisons or alternatively we could fund more drug treatment programs, put more money into low-income housing, have better schools, better health care, things like that, then I feel we would see a real difference in opinion about what would be the best policy to control crime. I think most people recognize that all of those factors play a role in contributing to crime, preventing crime.

In the absence of choices like that, when people are asked to support a bond issue to build more prisons, well, it seems like we're doing something about crime so people support that. I think it only points out the lack of real choices in dealing with crime. That is why we have had this escalating series of decisions and the system getting larger and larger in the past ten to twenty years.

There is definitely a correlation between poverty and crime. We need to remember, however, that most poor people do not commit crimes and many wealthy people do commit crimes, and so there are a lot of complex issues there. We do know that joblessness and homelessness are correlated somewhat with in-

[PRAYER from last page]

.....
in February and that by the time the warrant was issued, I had completed my probation and was free from any more probational accountability.

She then informed me that she would get this information through to the appropriate chain of command and suggest that I be released ASAP with no further probation; case closed. I was finally released at 1:05 am on June 8th from the San Diego County Jail. Without my shoes and some other clothing, I was terribly cold, but the property window was not open at that time. They didn't even say they were sorry for anything.

Besides keeping some of my property, one Sheriff even told me that I would get everything back but my Polo cologne, and sure enough, when I got my bag back, it was gone. It took me about eleven days to get back to San Francisco. Although I did contact someone about possibly filing a suit against the Sheriff's Department, I was told that it wouldn't do any good and that the most that I could look forward to was maybe getting a trip arranged to get back home. I did not want to wait around for what might not ever happen, so I started thinking about finding myself my own way back. By the way, the one lawyer who told me this was an attorney named Lee Witham of San Diego.

When I was told to return home and check my mailbox, I found it full of job offers from the State of California, all of which were null and void because the

final reply dates had all passed. Besides missing possible employment, I am now two months behind in my rent. I only hope that I can be reimbursed for some of the monetary losses that I incurred while I was held in custody.

AFTER THE BALL

by: Eddie Robideaux

I was walking around a couple one night a couple weeks ago, 'cause I was broke and my GA wasn't coming through until the 15th, so I couldn't hang around at the Anchor Bar with my friends until then. Okay, so I'm just wandering around, walking from the Ordway Center up to the State Capitol and back, just minding my own business, when the Governor's party celebrating some kind of new law or federal grant or whatever ended and everyone started coming out, so I just sort of stopped near the bottom of the stairs there and looked at them going out to their big expensive cars.

I recognized a few of the people's faces from the news and stuff, and there weren't too many Indians in there, okay, but I saw the wife of one of the McKnight's or somebody who was weaving a little on her way down the stairs. A little too much of the firewater, hey, and no big deal, I just thought it was kind of funny, so like an idiot I said, "Hey lady, you're lucky you ain't walking in Selbyville like that; the cops would maybe have to help you home, eh?"

And guess what, who comes up right then but a couple of bulls from the Saint Paul Police Department saying they'd take care of the situation, ma'am; sorry sir, have a nice night, and me, I'm going to myself, oh shit. I figured we'd dance around a little down by the fountain, they'd check me for outstandings and cut me loose.

Guess again, Geronimo. I got duckwalked to a squad car and handcuffed to the safety screen in back while they gave me a bunch of shit about being a long way from the Res, didn't I have some wild rice to husk or something while they checked my priors and frisked me. In my shirt pocket they found some of my blood pressure pills that I wrapped in a napkin from the White Castle 'cause my bottle got cracked, hey, and I didn't want to lose them or anything.

That did it. The bulls weren't worried about a detox collar anymore, they had a dooper on their hands. They scooted me off to South Wabasha Station and yanked me around all the way to processing, dumped me on the bench and said, "Stay put while we do your paperwork, Tonto. Hey, guys, here comes the first scalp of the night!" I was printed, photoed and classified. They tossed me in a tank with a bunch of Mexicans; I don't know why. Hell, I don't even speak Spanish.

Anyhow, I'd called Steve and Mike, my friends over by Powderhorn Park across the river, and they said maybe they could borrow my bail from Yvonne tomorrow morning, so hang tight. So I did, hey, though I'm sick of

only knowing Spanish words like "cabron" and "pendejo" and "maricon" and all that crap. At least they didn't rough me up like the cops did. I got bruises on my arm and everything, and they weren't from the sloppy needle sticks I get when they draw the blood too quick at the Cutter Plasma Center on University Avenue, either.

To make a long story short, I lucked out, because Mike got through to his friend who's a worker at Loaves and Fishes, a food line we use a lot, and she fronted my bail until I got my GA, so I was out before midnight. We were driving the pickup real slow down Franklin 'cause Mike's brake lights and turn signals don't work in back and he's got a lot of unpaid ticket warrants hanging over him and couldn't handle the tow and impound fees if he got busted. So here we are crawling along when we see two cops rousting Susie, this Chippewa woman we know who's obviously had a few and they're shoving her into their car for a quick hop over to the detox at Hennepin General and some time off for rolls and coffee in the canteen while she got processed in. Way to go, guys, she was just about to kick the shit out of some rich paleface, eh?

If it's the Governor's wife, the strain of her position in high society makes her imbibe too much; but if she's a Chippewa woman, she's just another drunken squaw.

Eddie Robideaux is a Native American who has been homeless for most of his adult life in St. Paul.

From The Prison Diary Of David D. Johns

*Inmate #1198311, Dorm A
San Francisco County Jail
#7
San Bruno, CA*

TODAY I AM ADDING something new to my diary: sadness, anger and frustration. I am mourning for my lost buddies. For my battered self image. The irony of my situation is that though I'm finally so close to my dreams and hopes, I am adding to my nightmares. I should mention here that I am in solidarity with everyone infected with the HIV disease because I carry within myself the knowledge of loss and longing associated with death from an end so easily seen and yet still unknown:

I HAVE THE BLACK seed of AIDS too. The spectre of death and indignity and prejudice grows like a hideous weed in my body. It's threatening to choke the flowers in my soul's garden. I try every day to remove its root from the once fertile soil of my dreams, but it just shoots up again. Bigger and blacker, each day it seems to be closer to me.

AND MY GARDEN devices of such accomplished ingenuity are just tin cans and bent hangers and string next to this horrible reality. The weed of AIDS is seeding itself and the people

*Sleep
bouys drifting blankets.
It bobs on weathered snores
fogging cracked windows
with exhausted vapors. . .*

around me are its offshoots. Their callousness and stupidity saps my garden's strength of purpose.

FLOWERS DON'T bloom, vines and roots can't bear fruit or flower because the water on my garden is salty with my tears. Unable to produce the hope that previous chapters in my dairy overflowed with, I have no gifts for the baskets I want to give to my family of fellow AIDS victims. The salt from my night sweats sours the sweetness of the yet unborn greens and stalks.

COMPOSTING CAN not complete the cycle of processing wasted lives back into healthy soil. It can't turn a baby's uncontrollable excrement of phlegm and blood into life supporting soil. Or death into rebirth. Not with inoculations of suffering and hatred.

MY DREAM GARDEN has been my worst nightmare. I'm only growing sadness and more heartbreaking losses because I mourn each death from AIDS as my own. And the God I thought I was coming to understand in terms of my garden is a dark entity, watching us toil away against insurmountable odds. And the real irony to me is that I do still care.

A Report From The Res

by: Jay "Dark Arm"
Walters

*Executive Director of the
Chippewa Resource and
Advocacy Center*

Editor's Note: Since the mid 1970's, Dark Arm Walters has worked as an Indian rights activist and welfare law advocate for Native Americans of Chippewa and Ojibway background in the Twin Cities. Of Dutch-English and Chippewa stock, Dark Arm has lived and worked both at the Red Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota and extensively in the neighborhood bounded by Franklin, Snelling, Portland and Lake Streets in Minneapolis known locally as "the Res" (short for "reservation"), due to its high preponderance of residents from Native American backgrounds. He founded the Chippewa Resource and Advocacy Center (C.R.A.C.) in late 1987 as an independent Native American legal rights and welfare benefits advocacy organization in the Twin Cities area, with tribal programs at the Red Lake and Detroit Lakes reservations and outreach services for the Dakotas.

The Twin Cities, and Minneapolis in particular, has the highest per capita percentage of residents of Native American origin in the U.S. or Canada. This population also is notable for its extraordinarily precarious position in Minneapolis's social structure and economy. Levels of household income, educational attainment and life expectancy (the average age of death for Native American males is 47) are among the lowest in the nation, while rates of alcoholism, drug abuse, incarceration, teen pregnancy, fetal alcohol syndrome, single-parent families, chronic unemployment, illiteracy and mental illness (mostly severe depression and schizophrenia) are as high or higher than those for any comparable minority ethnic group in the country today.

The consequences of the AIDS epidemic, AFDC and SSI cutbacks and a staggering increase in the numbers of homeless Native Americans brought about by uncontrolled rent hikes and the elimination of affordable low-income housing due to ongoing high-rise office and hotel construction in the Twin Cities since the 1960's are rapidly hastening the process of racial genocide started by European settlers in Chippewa and Ojibway lands during the 1800's.

It is easy to feel empathy for the plight of a people cut off from their ageless and supposedly primitivist traditions when their culture is presented in a format of cinematographic romanticism and nostalgic reconciliation such as was portrayed in the film "Dances

With Wolves" last year, but it was another matter altogether for the good burghers of Minneapolis who flocked to this film to even glance at the dishevelled, unconscious forms of real life latter-day Native Americans they stepped over on city sidewalks en route to the show. This represented a less than romantic spectacle of urban decay, one which has been accelerated by the application of harsh economic and social policies directed toward people of Native American background since the first peace treaties between white settlers and the Chippewa tribes were broken over a century ago.

In my work with Native Americans from the upper Midwest I've been repeatedly struck by their attitude of hopelessness, counterbalanced by an even more intense spirit of stubborn resistance which empowers them to reject the degraded status of worthless drunken Indians that is assigned to them by this society as a whole, a feat which is all the more remarkable in view of the institutionalized racism routinely practiced here by federal and city officials, police and white people in general.

As a Native American, I am profoundly grateful that in spite of the nearly absolute rejection of both our cultural and political integrity and a continuing pattern of deliberate exclusion for people of Native American origin from areas of genuine economic opportunity in the American mainstream, our tribes still maintain a sense of heritage which makes the burden of racist oppression imposed upon

us in a society ruled by white man's insecurities and white man's laws bearable if not excusable.

The sops thrown to us by movies such as "Dances With Wolves" are almost too insulting to comment upon. Our culture was not just a charming exotic pastoral prelude to the advent of European "progress" on the North American continent which can be massaged away by promoting some misty-eyed epic of primitive valor against the inevitability of conquest by a superior civilization and technology. What attempts to pass itself off as a visionary work of redemptive historical justification is nothing but a piece of white revisionist propaganda offered as a backhanded apology for the near-slaughter of an entire people and their way of life.

Well, that's just not good enough! Keep your self-serving contemporary fantasies of noble Native American savagery purged from the lebensraum of virgin American plains by the irresistible force of European destiny to yourselves, because the slaughter isn't over yet. According to official figures of the 1990 Census, there are currently fewer than 3,000,000 Native Americans left in the U.S. today, and our numbers are expected to continue diminishing over the next decade. In Minneapolis alone, nearly half of the clients I used to work with in the 1970's and 1980's are dead, and most of them were my age (I'm 36). There are times when I don't think our people will make it, that we'll be swallowed whole by the world of the white man or simply crushed by the unending pressures

of poverty and racism which afflict so many minorities in our big cities now.

But I have reason to hope. Ephemeral though it is, there does seem to be a revival of interest in and sympathy for the cause of Native Americans in the mass culture of this country in recent years, as indicated by the success of "Dances With Wolves," such movies as "Pow Wow Highway" and the shamanistic sequences from "The Doors." Even the relentless character of official and judicial oppression has moderated in the period since A.I.M. (the American Indian Movement) was more or less hounded out of existence in the late 1980's. And among Native Americans themselves there is definitely more of a feeling of solidarity in protest against the conditions of poverty and racism that we've endured with such stoic apathy until just recently. Activism and a sense of pride in our cultural identity is coming back at last.

All of which is fine, but this obviously won't be enough on its own to revitalize our traditions or heal the wounds of more than a century of brutalization by an antagonistic social system made up of conquerors, opportunists and criminal outcasts from racist nations across the seas. In one respect, Native Americans are fortunate to be returning to the struggle for equality and dignity at this time, because so many other oppressed minorities are renewing their commitment to liberation now also, in a period when mainstream values and the political status quo are being seriously questioned even

by their own upholders.

When a society starts to shut its doors on those whose families and communities have participated as full partners with the prevailing order in generations past but whose inheritors now no longer make the grade and are being pushed into the ranks of the lower classes who made previous mainstream privileges possible, change is surely soon to come, change which will benefit everyone.

And that includes us.

Dark Arm Walters is a formerly homeless Native American attorney and legal rights activist working to protect Chippewa, Ojibway and Oglala Sioux tribespeople from the Twin Cities, Dakotas, central Canada and the Midwest.

Temper Worry Relife

Today is pray day
Will I get my tem-
porary re-|||@
check

Today is Pay Day
Will I get my tem-
per-airy re-|||††
check

To day is play day
Give me my temper
worry relief check!
To-borrow is pray
day again

I need more tempo-
rary relief

*Isaac Joevan Spivey,
recently homeless,
now lives and works
in the Tenderloin.*
