



Frances Jetter

THE WAR ON POVERTY

A VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES

by Julie Snyder

BEFORE THE CURRENT WAR ON THE POOR
THERE WAS THE WAR ON POVERTY.

— CHUCK WILDER

Have you heard the joke about hungry people in America? President Reagan told it to a group of high school students recently and it goes something like this: Why is the hungry person hungry? Because s/he is too stupid to know where the food is. For those in his audience who didn't get it, Reagan explained that between federal food programs and private charity there is enough food to feed anyone who is truly in need. If there is a hungry person in America, it is their own fault.

Possibly the worst thing that might have happened to that joke was the 'Hands Across America' event, a recent and well publicized effort to draw attention to hunger. The promoters hope to have raised fifty million dollars to go toward feeding the hungry. But after five years of continual cuts in federal food programs even that impressive sum will not fill the hole that is being dug. Should Reagan get even half of the seven hundred and seventy million dollar cut in child nutrition programs and the three hundred and thirteen million dollar cut in the food stamp program he is requesting for the coming fiscal year, that fifty million dollars is going to rattle in the hole like a solitary pea.

How well does the President's joke go over in Clatsop County? Where does the ignorant hungry person in Cannon Beach, Seaside, Warrenton, Astoria or Knappa go to find food? (Note that Clatsop's unemployment rate stood at 10.4 percent in March, up from 9.2 percent in February.)

There are food stamps, of course, and in February of this year two thousand, seven hundred and thirty-six people in Clatsop County were receiving them. But food stamps do not cover the total monthly cost of food, nor are they intended to. A single parent with 2.14 (?) children and a gross monthly income of three hundred and ninety-seven dollars may receive up to a maximum of two hundred and eight dollars in food stamps (though variables will bring that maximum down). A single person with zero income gets a maximum of eighty dollars in food stamps. Where do these people go when food stamps don't stretch?

If they live in the Knappa-Svensen area they can go to the Knappa Food Bank for approximately five days worth of food once a month. If in the Astoria-Warrenton-Hammond area,

they can go to the Clatsop Emergency Food Bank for approximately five days worth of food once every two months. (The food bank's board of directors is considering a policy change to three days worth of food once a month.) North Clatsop County residents may try the Salvation Army for emergency food, which is administered by the Astoria Police Department. However, this source is a one

time assist and the Astoria Police have some rather peculiar ideas as to who does or does not merit this aid. It is standard practice for them to run a police check on anyone who goes to them for Salvation Army help.

In the south Clatsop County area people can go to the Seaside Food Bank for about five days worth of food once a month. Or, again, there is the Salvation Army, which is administered by the Seaside Police, for one time assistance. Word has it that the Seaside Police are adhering to the humanitarian guidelines set by the Salvation Army for allotting their funds.

Other than these sources for food, it is catch as catch can. Some fraternal organizations and most churches will try to help if they can, but they are hit with requests for a variety of emergency needs and quickly run through the monthly emergency funds they try to provide.

So that is where the food is in Clatsop County. Is it enough? That depends on where you stand in relation to the problem. But it is certain that, given ongoing federal cutbacks, local communities will have to start peddling faster just to maintain the status quo. If peddling is your exercise of choice, call any (or all) of the following people: Harry Smith, Knappa Food Bank, at 458-6692; Peg Christi, Clatsop Emergency Food Bank, at 325-2834; Bob Capps, Seaside Food Bank, at 738-6439.

Homeless Shelter

During services on Sunday, May 25, members of the Pioneer Presbyterian Church and Clatsop Community Action heard the official announcement: an emergency shelter facility for families and women, to be located in the house adjacent to the church, would soon open its doors. Those listening could take pride in the knowledge that it was their compassion for the homeless and their persistence in confronting and overturning obstacles that made this announcement possible.

A couple of 'celebrities' were on hand that day. Michael Stoops, director of Baloney Joe's in Portland was there to put the problem of the homeless in perspective. There are an estimated five thousand homeless persons throughout Oregon. "It's a statewide phenomenon," he said. "Burnside has become the dumping ground, but every community needs a shelter."

And first district state legislator Tom Hanlon was there to praise the community for its efforts and to take a bow for his own contribution as a member of the state emergency

EXPO EVICT

Oregonians should be aware of what is happening at Expo '86 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Inexpensive housing in that city is at a premium. The downtown hotels were home to many of the city's poor because of their low rents but they are now being evicted from their rooms to make way for tourists and their money.

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Residents' Association estimates that about five hundred people have been evicted from at least fourteen hotels and that evictions continue. Many of these people have been moving from hotel to hotel, only to be ousted again. Some hotels promise not to evict them, then raise the rent by as much as forty percent. For these needy people an increase that size is in fact an eviction.

If you get to Vancouver and are surprised at the prices some of the more expensive hotels are charging Expo visitors and if you decide to head downtown to a lower priced hotel, you will have to cross the Granville, Burrard or Cambie Street bridges. Take a moment to think about who is under the bridges.

The people camping below are not transients or hobos. They are the city's poor: old age pensioners, veterans, the disabled, the unemployed, people who once lived in the hotels Expo visitors may be checking into.

We cannot return these people to their homes but we can see that the hotel owners do not make a profit. If people can afford a trip to Expo '86, they can afford to pay a little extra to stay somewhere else.

— RONAYE T. TYLER

Ronaye T. Tyler lives in Newport.

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