

Children's Christmas Issue

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Three Sections



Ruth Haefner and Marie Smith at dedication of Haefner Plaza. Portland Housing Authority, housing project for senior citizens. The project, located at 80005 S.W. Beaverton Hilldale Highway, will serve low income persons. (Photo: Richard Brown)

Christmas and 'Les Miserables'

by Franz Schurman,
Pacific News Service

As auto sales and housing starts rise, and, especially, as early Christmas shopping seems brisk, Reagan officials are optimistic that the long-awaited consumer-led recovery may have come.

But big city mayors are worried about something else—a rapidly increasing flow of homeless people into their cities. They hope that they are just transients between jobs, available to be re-absorbed into a recovering economy.

Unfortunately, signs from other countries in similar straits indicate these "new poor" are going to be a permanent part of our urban landscape. They can be seen by the thousands in most of Europe's major cities.

While administration officials still believe that new economic growth will cut down the number of our new poor, the signs are multiplying that even if economic growth resumes, it will be with permanently high unemployment.

Throughout the nation, major businesses are cutting their work forces, hoping to keep productivity high by substituting machines for workers. And in thousands of city small businesses or rural farms, employers prefer to hire immigrants or old poor.

The new poor come from all walks of middle and working class life. There are the families encamped in vans or tents on the outskirts of cities. There are many middle-aged in business suits. But a very large number of them are young people from middle-class backgrounds. Unlike the 1960s, when the "flower children" by and large still could return to their parents' home, now many have no place to go back to. And, unlike immigrants, they have no friends or relatives or urban community with whom they can bed

down until some opportunity comes by. That gives them the ultimate anonymity of no address and no telephone number.

Besides all their problems, the new poor have to battle against an ingrained antipathy among all too many Americans against poverty. The ancestors of most Americans came here to escape poverty. In the 1960s, most Americans supported the government-led effort to eradicate poverty, even though they did not relish the idea of poor and dark-skinned folk coming into their neighborhoods. And then in the 1970s, Americans decided to forget about poverty.

Perhaps we are just becoming like people elsewhere in the world who look on poverty as an unfortunate but natural condition of life. But we might consider that in France, for

example, a distinction has always been made between the poor and the miserables. The poor, as the French see it, are people who survive, even if barely. "Les miserables" are those who cannot even survive, like the tortured loner in Victor Hugo's great novel.

Many of the new poor worked hard as individuals to get into the workforce. The qualified, got jobs, and thought they were moving on up the career ladder of achievement. Now they have been ejected, and as individuals are left to fend for themselves.

The philosophy that governs the Reagan Administration, and even more the kindred Thatcher government in Britain, is that our overloaded economic systems must be subject to a thorough shake-up so that (Please turn to page 6 column 3)

Struggle triumphs over adversity

Grassroot News, N.W.—Nothing symbolizes the true meaning of Christmas, 1982, as struggles and triumphs. One family in N.E. Portland has lived this definition: Stephanie Brown and her three children. A single parent who survived four years of college to complete a two year program in nursing, she finds herself above water at this time. "Currently, I'm attending the Oregon Health Science Center. I'm a student nurse in my sophomore year."

In the beginning Ms. Brown's ambition was to become an M.D. "But it wouldn't be fair to my children to study 48 hours a day. So, I changed my major to nursing and was accepted into the program at the Sci-

ence Center."

Many young single parents would have found the situation of going back to school with a limited budget an no babysitter intolerable. Ms. Brown overcame. "I just did it. When I had Chevazz he had to come to school with me. When I got pregnant with Samaya I had to take time off. When she was first born I had to take her to school with me to finish my last term. It didn't work out too well but I finished. The way I got over was to take each day, one at a time."

One of her major problems was finances. "I had no car or bus fare so my children and I had to walk to school from N.E. 12th and Stanton to N. Killingsworth and Albina. I

had no babysitter, clothes or anything. I just took one day at a time, and did the best I could. I was lucky because I had a real close family. When things became life-threatening and I had no more resources my family helped out as much as they could. But, it was very stressful to try and go to school and at the same time maintain your family. It can be done."

Mrs. Brown supported herself with a grant from Aid to Dependent Children, which in many cases, made it counter-productive to try and go to school to better oneself. "When I received my grant to go to school the food stamp people just counted my tuition as deductible. All the other items such as transportation and books were counted as income. They didn't care if you had books or not. So, you are left with no food stamps or they would give you some which would not be enough to feed your family. If they do give you food stamps they wanted you to come back every three months to give them the same information you gave them three months ago. It became a real pain."

Wouldn't it be easier to sit home and watch soap operas all day and stay in taverns all night? "No, it might seem easier, but I'm sure I would have to pay for it in the long run. I have three children who have to go to school. They need clothes and a college education. My children deserve all the things in childhood that I didn't have. And the way our dear president with his inhumanistic approach to social programs is, my family and I would be in big trouble. You can't make it on welfare. You're in this constant state of never having enough money, food or clothes. I don't think that is any kind of way to live."

Stephanie Brown's inspiration was her mother. "She raised us all to dream big and not let anything stop us. She would tell us that we could do it but we must put out an effort. My sisters helped out. I couldn't have taken chemistry without my sister coming to school to watch him because they won't allow him into the lab. Another sister would loan me money to pay a bill (Please turn to page 11 column 3)



Stephanie Brown and her children, Cinque, 8, Chevazz, 3 and Samaya celebrate another year of struggle and triumph. (Photo: Richard Brown)

March on Washington announced

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Evoking the names and ideas of the historic 1963 March on Washington which brought hundreds of thousands to the capital in the country's largest civil rights demonstration, prominent black leaders issued a "Christmas Call to the Nation" on December 20th to reconvene the famous "Coalition of Conscience," enlarged by the participation of other movements for non-violent social change which have emerged during the last 20 years.

The Christmas Call to the Nation from black leaders was announced on Monday at the National Christmas Tree on Washington's Ellipse.

"We selected this site—and the holiday season—to issue our call in the spirit of 'peace on earth, good will to all,'" Fauntroy said. "We believe that a comprehensive and broad cultural, political and economic program can challenge our nation to fulfill the noble dream of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," he added.

The National Campaign for the

Twentieth Anniversary of the Historic March on Washington—organized by Coretta Scott King, President, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change; Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy (D-D.C.), Chairman, Congressional Black Caucus; Dr. Benjamin Hooks, Executive Director, NAACP, and Joseph Lowery, President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference—is intended to "assemble the great 'Coalition of Conscience' around the themes of 'Jobs, Peace and Freedom' which led this nation forward," according to the letter announcing the event sent to hundreds of national black leaders.

Although initiated by black leaders, the new "Coalition of Conscience" "will unite the civil rights movement, organized labor, the women's movement, the churches and the peace movement in a common effort to achieve jobs, peace and freedom," the leaders stated. "The time has come for these

groups, who share common goals, to join together to become a powerful political force," they added.

The catalyst for the new Coalition of Conscience will be a massive gathering in Washington on August 27, 1983, which will kick off a comprehensive legislative and grassroots campaign to implement the coalition's goals.

In addition to King, Fauntroy, Hooks and Lowery, others who issued the Christmas Call to the Nation included: D.C. Mayor Marion S. Barry, Jr., Congressman John Conyers (D-Mich.), sponsor of the Martin Luther King Holiday Bill; Jesse Jackson, President, Operation PUSH; William Lucy, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, V.P. AFSCME; Bishop John Adams, President, Congress of National Black Churches; Robert Reeder, National Executive Secretary, Omega Psi Phi, and State Senator Clarence Mitchell, President National Black Caucus of State Legislators.



Coast Janitorial Service celebrated its 25th Anniversary with a party for employees. Visiting during the even were. (from left to right): Barbara Staples, Manager; Willie Mieldon, Quality Control Manager; Romeo Connell, Salem Area Manager;

Patty Cantwell, Payroll Manager; Joshua Hutchins, District Marketing Manager; Herb Cawthorne, featured speaker; Henry D. Scott, President; Baruti Artharee; and Kathleen Tinnon, Manager.

(Photo: Richard Brown)