

VOL. 66 NO. 4 APRIL, 1983

THE WITNESS

To Repair the Ruined Cities

Donald W. Shriver, Jr.

Something New in the Wind:

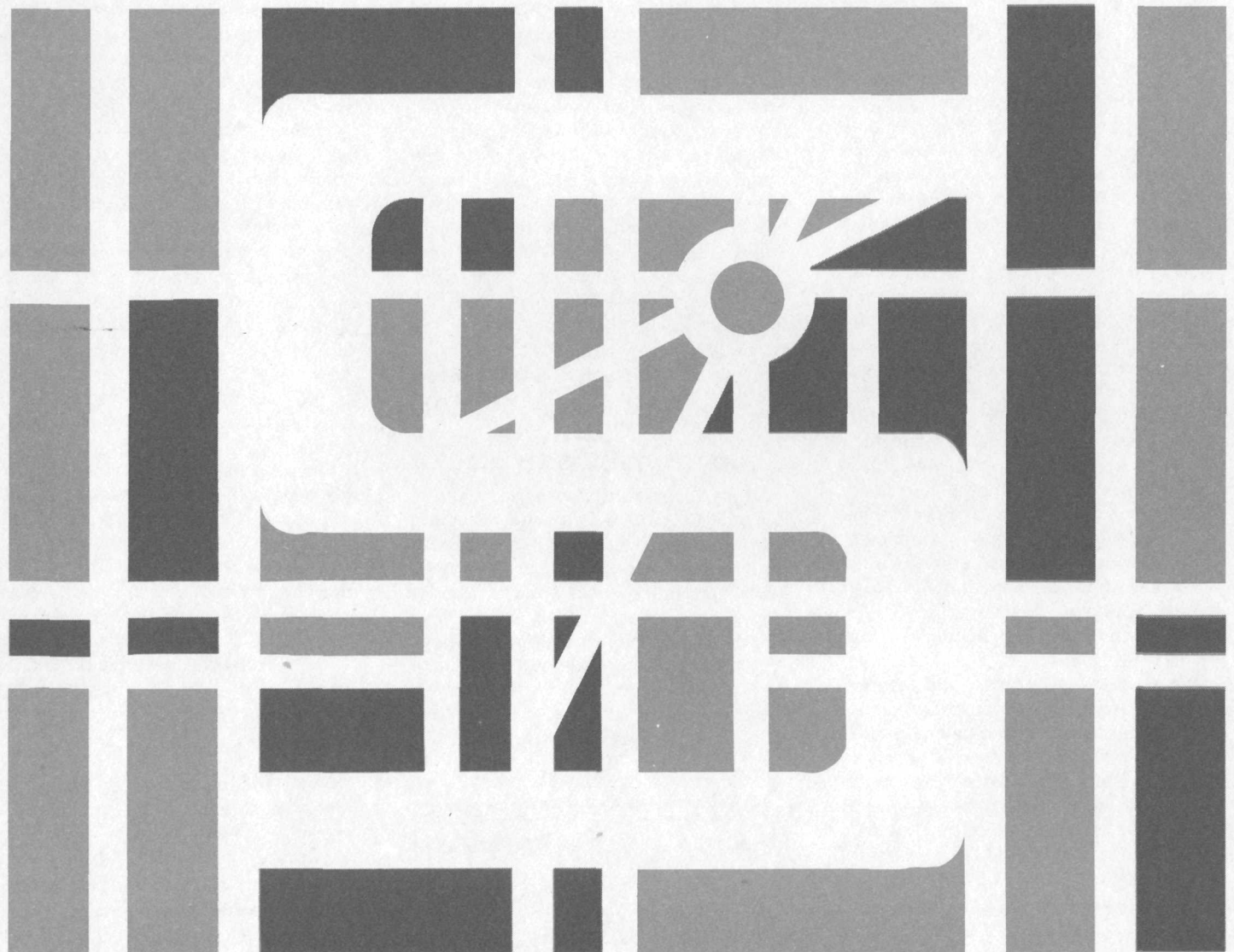
Bishops vs. Economic Policy

Richard W. Gillett

Sheltering the Homeless:

The Power of Futility

John Poppy



LETTERS
LETTERS
LETTERS
LETTERS
LETTERS
LETTERS
LETTERS

Re: Exquisitely Insensitive

Tithing Fiscal Archaism

Judith Anderson makes a number of excellent points in her protest against pressure for tithing ("The Exquisitely Insensitive Approach to Tithing," January.) She has, however, overlooked one of the most fundamental.

The biblical standard of tithing was established when the Jews were governed theocratically — the church and the state were one. Moses and his assistants and their successors were responsible not only for the spiritual well-being of the people, but for the maintenance of public order, public health, education, national defense, the conduct of foreign relations, the standardization of weights and measures, and whatever other governmental functions there were to perform. The tithe supported all of this. Hence, the modern equivalent of tithing is not to give 10% of income (either gross or after-tax) to the church, but to give 10% of gross income to the church and government combined.

My advice to Ms. Anderson is this. First, calculate your total income. Don't fuss about technical exemptions — this is not for some lawyer or accountant, but for God. Put it all in — gifts from parents, child-support payments, food stamps, everything you have available to meet your expenses. Second, calculate 10% of that total. Third, subtract all your tax payments, federal, state, and local. If the remainder is positive, this is what you should be contributing to the church; if it's negative, you could try asking the church to pay it to you, or just regard it

as a carry-forward of supererogation. In either case, you can look the Presiding Bishop and other apostles of stewardship in the eye when they come around on their tithing canvasses, knowing that you are doing your fair share according to the Word of God.

It is of course true that this fundamentalist interpretation of tithing would let affluent communicants off the ecclesiastical hook along with those in Judith Anderson's income bracket. This might make the Standing Commission on Stewardship and Development regret that they brought the matter up in the first place, which would be all to the good, since tithing really has no more relevance to 20th century American Christendom than do animal sacrifices and patriarchal polygamy. If, however, they wish to persist in fiscal archaism without losing the support of the wealthy, they should consider resurrecting the *sin offering* and the *thank offering*.

The Rev. David F. Ross
Lexington, Ky.

Little Contact With Blacks

Just an observation about the contents of the article, "The Exquisitely Insensitive Approach to Tithing," by Judith Anderson. It is obvious that the author either has little contact with churches in the Black religious tradition as well as in the inner-city Pentecostal and Holiness tradition or has misunderstood the place and urgency of tithing in those churches. Contrary to her well-meaning protests of sympathy, these churches with their

august buildings as well as their storefronts are largely made up of the people whom the author thinks should be exempt from the rigor of giving a tithe of 10%: the unemployed, the underemployed, the female single parents, the poor, the ADC parents, the Food Stamps recipients as well as middle-class Blacks.

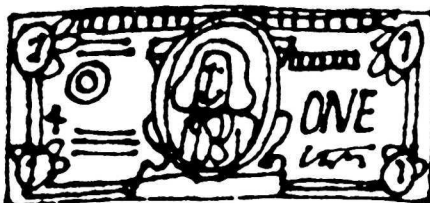
Tithing is a crucial part of their tradition and spirituality, a point always emphasized in their worship at the time of the offertory and in the preaching. Nor is the tithe trivialized and made less rigorous in those churches by stretching the idea of 10% to include "time" and "talent" as the author is wont to do. Such a stretching may be appealing to Episcopalians and others in churches whose giving is not at all commensurate with the suspected affluence of its membership, but not in the churches of the Blacks and the poor. A tithe is understood to mean 10% of one's income for the work of God and His kingdom both for the poor and the oppressed. It is an important understanding of stewardship for them.

I trust this answers the author's rhetorical query about "Would anyone preach about tithing 10% to a poor inner-city parish?". Black churches as well as the Pentecostal and Holiness churches have done it for decades and their people respond accordingly.

The Rev. R. E. Hood
General Theological Seminary
New York, N.Y.

Often Feel Guilty

Thanks to Judith Anderson for her sensitive article on tithing. I am an "older" university student working my way through a Ph.D. Funds are not available for basic repairs, TV, etc. which



Approach to Tithing

everyone takes for granted, to say nothing of new clothes. We want to give, but often feel guilty because the amount is so small.

Jane E. Rasmussen
St. Louis Park, Minn.

Asking Right Questions

As to Judith Anderson's questions in the January WITNESS about to whom the Episcopal Church is talking when it talks about tithing, the answers are yes, yes, and yes. Yes, it is the middle and upper classes talking to the middle and upper classes. Yes, we (the above) and they (the "worthy poor") are alive and well as functional categories. Yes, the Episcopal Church tries its darndest to remain an Old Boys' Club in matters of money (just as it does in a quite literal way in sacramental matters, in this neck of the woods). Your questions, sister, are the right ones to be asking; I'm sorry that the answers can only add to your anguish.

In fairness to the General Convention, it must be said that, given the predominantly upper-class base of support for our church, and given the relative stinginess of the rich (an average 1-2% of income given away) as compared to the poor (+5%), some kind of mandate to this group to give has long been necessary. Moreover, this action does take one step toward moving monetary income — specific dollar amounts — out of the sacred silence which "politeness" imposes on it in our society, and into the realm of ordinary conversation and analysis. This is a piece of de-mystifica-

tion essential to overthrowing money as an idol and reducing it to what it is — a thing, a tool, a necessary commodity, an (other) occasion for stewardship — and that's *all*. No mystery, no symbolic value no basic importance.

Your questions, however, go beneath that practical response to given social norms and call us to yet further demystification of the causes and rationale for the norms themselves. I only hope that your plea is heard by a church which mostly keeps itself ignorant of and goes supinely along with its own identity in the class-structure, and is thereby incapacitated from addressing itself to the fundamental issues of justice which that raises.

But cheer up; things could be worse. You could live in our diocese instead of your own. Unemployment and job insecurity is just about as bad here as it is there; the concentration of elderly people is probably much higher. My husband, our parish treasurer, practically weeps as he counts out the nickels, quarters and \$1 bills pledged mostly out of Social Security (or less) to the weekly offering (no upper-class base of support here!).

"Money," you say, "is a very sensitive subject, but do we realize how symbolic it is?" Oh yes, Judith Anderson, I think we do; I really think we do. The only question is, how long we will tolerate such "symbols" as communications appropriate to the Body of Christ?

Carol Carlson
Mt. Jewett, Pa.

Ms. Anderson Responds

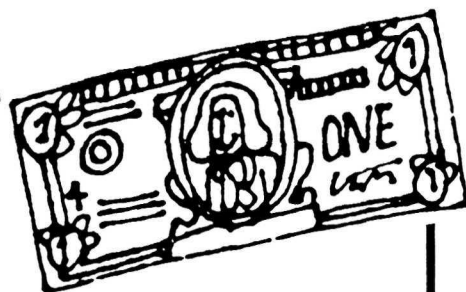
I find the letters, and the dialogue, most interesting. In answer to R. E. Hood, it is true that my background does not

include direct experience with the Black religious tradition and the Pentecostal and Holiness traditions. But I understand that another aspect of these traditions is a long-standing sense of community, empathy and mutual support, like that of a very close-knit family, sensitive to its members in need; a warm, rather egalitarian atmosphere with less of the hidden hierarchies and classism one senses in the ordinary Episcopal parish church. I admire the generosity and awareness (and exuberance) in these traditions.

David Ross's comments about the "theocratic" history of tithing are helpful to bear in mind in this context, underscoring the idea of a community's sensitivity to its "family" responsibilities. If we can treat one another in the household with more tact, perhaps we can better offer Christ's gifts to the world.

I think we should all welcome the frankness of Carol Carlson's letter, the call to some hard self-examination of ourselves and our denomination. The anger and outrage and pain are very real. As we begin publicly to tell our stories in vivid detail, we may learn to communicate truly in every sense of that liturgical word.

Judith Anderson
East Lansing, Mich.



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THE WITNESS

Something New in the Wind:

In the religious community's perennial and frequently controversial engagement with societal issues, something new is in the wind. Following the widespread public debate engendered by the U.S. Roman Catholic Bishops' draft pastoral letter on the nuclear arms race — itself a milestone — there is now emerging from the churches the beginnings of a major moral challenge to current economic policy.

The most recent example came in a statement titled "Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis" issued in January by the Commission for Social Affairs of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. In that statement they urged the Canadian government to develop an industrial strategy to create permanent and meaningful jobs. They characterized the present recession as possibly "symptomatic of a much larger structural crisis in the capitalist system." In a similar vein, last September the Urban Bishops Coalition of the U.S. Episcopal Church issued a Labor Day pastoral letter which called the present crisis of plant closings and high unemployment "the most

severe economic upheaval in more than a century," and stated that the "internationalization of investments and production, combined with new technologies, places the economic future of millions of families and hundreds of local communities in jeopardy."

Other denominations either separately or in concert are also beginning to issue declarations and initiate programs attempting to deal with the economic crisis in a structural way. The U.S. Roman Catholic bishops are slated to issue a major pastoral letter in 1984 on capitalism and Christianity which promises to stir widespread discussion.

These efforts are more than a generalized cry to aid the unemployed and restore social welfare cuts. They begin to question on moral and religious grounds some long-held assumptions about profit, jobs, capital and economic freedom in America — the underpinnings of the free enterprise system itself.

Is the new trend simply a headline-grabbing effort by clergy to distract from an inability to "speak convincingly about such

Churches vs. Economic Policy

Richard W. Gillett

untrendy subjects as sin and salvation," as columnist George F. Will put it? That cynical dismissal ignores what some economists and even a few politicians are beginning to recognize: that there is a profound crisis in the structure and shape of work occurring in the Western industrial world. In America the crisis is afflicting millions of workers in the form of plant closures and layoffs and is dooming hundreds of communities across the country to economic lifelessness.

The sweeping dimensions of the economic crisis are beginning to convince many that they go far deeper than mere criticism of Reaganomics.

According to Massachusetts economists Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, this economic crisis has seen the loss of between 30 and 50 million jobs in the 1970s, in a massive "deindustrialization" of the United States and a rapid shift to a service and information-oriented economy. The increasing ease in moving capital and equipment across the globe, and the accelerating use of robots and other automation techniques are

additional developments which seem to bode ill for a return to any acceptable rates of unemployment and community stability.

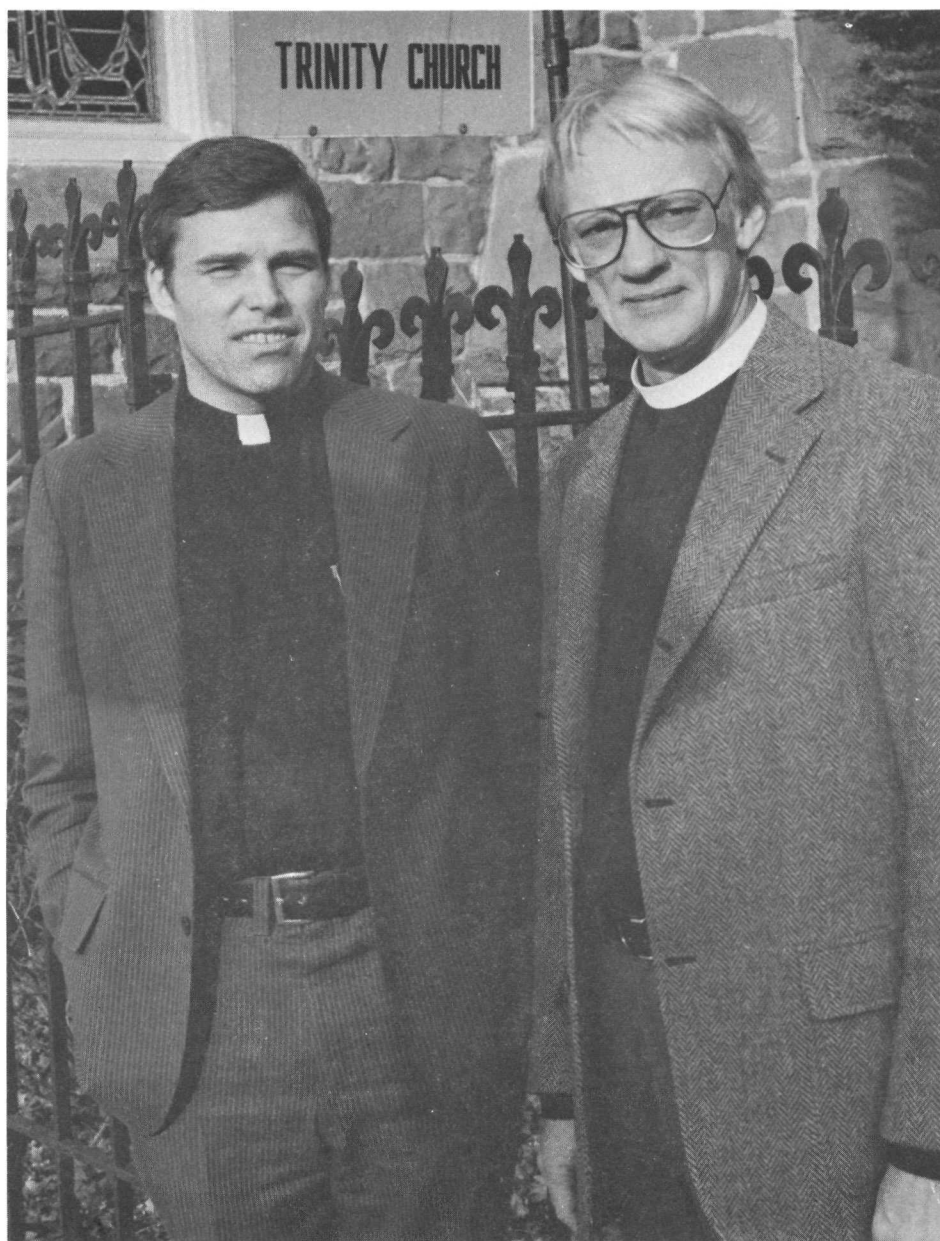
Unemployment among people of color, (among Black teenagers it is about 50%) has long been chronic — a systematic denial of training and placement opportunities for people who may never even enter the work force, thus constituting a "permanent underclass" in the wealthiest nation on earth.

What is important about the new religious statements on the economy is not necessarily the specific analyses they offer, but rather that they come out of substantive moral beliefs that have deep religious foundations in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Among these are the special value and dignity of human work in the divine plan for creation, the inherent preciousness of the community of all human beings, and the strong scriptural emphasis upon the poor and the outcast as special objects of the divine concern. Coming from that angle, they have the power that religious institutions at their best can offer society: the ability to judge the performance of

all of our economic and social institutions by the plumbline of how well they enhance the fulfillment of the individual and promote a wholesome and caring society for even the least of its members.

These criteria should be applied to such critical emerging questions as whether the use of capital is now serving and enhancing community (or whether it increasingly serves its owners); whether work is for the person (or whether a person is a mere cog in the production process); whether workers ought to have participation in major work-related decisions affecting them, such as their own disemployment (or whether both unions and management treat them as less-than-intelligent automatons), and how each of these questions relate to the rising racism and sexism of recent years.

If churches and synagogues have the courage to do so and the conviction of their own religious beliefs, they could make a major contribution to what ought to become the focus of a great national debate: how our economic system can be designed to serve the people and not vice versa. ■



The day before Thanksgiving, rector Robert Cromey (right) told the staff at Trinity Church in San Francisco, "Things have reached the point where we ought to have a Trinity flophouse." The Rev. Richard Kerr (left), a volunteer assistant said, "I'll make it happen if you'll let me." Cromey said, "Go." A week later, the church was the first in its city to take in homeless people overnight, and the congregation has rallied around a shelter program that could have an impact far beyond the 125 men a night to whom it offers refuge.

The doors were just closed, not locked, and the men waiting on the pavement outside wanted very much to leave the night chill and go in. Around the corner, the staff monitors had opened the nave of the church. They did it every evening for people who wanted to sit in a pew and stay warm until 10 o'clock, when the meetings in the parish hall would be cleared out and volunteers would have 120 cots and blankets set up. Many of the volunteers had been homeless themselves; they worked swiftly and unsentimentally to get things ready.

Sheltering the

At 10 p.m. the men started coming in. Each one showed his referral slip from a city distribution point, then headed for a cot where he would spend the night. (Women, couples, and children had been sent to several hotels in the city's Tenderloin, half a mile farther downtown.) If one didn't have a slip, he went in after those who did. Some wore clothes that had long since lost their shape and carried bundles that probably needed cleaning, but most looked little different from the way you or I would look if we had spent some days outdoors. Which they had. The one thing common to all the men was that they had no home to sleep in that night.

A few hand-lettered signs over the rows of cots said "NO Smoking — Alcohol — Stealing — Fights — Gambling — Sex — Weapons — Drugs." The calm presence of the monitors, combined with the generally

John Poppy, a former senior editor of *Look* and managing editor of *Saturday Review: The Arts*, contributes to numerous national magazines. He and his wife Julia attend Trinity Episcopal Church in San Francisco.

subdued bearing of the men as they came in, made the signs seem almost a polite formality. Besides, a spirit of community had taken hold in the shelter within days after it opened; old-timers tended to answer newcomers' questions and keep them from rocking the boat. There was no milling around, not much noise. Just men finding cots, lying down, and going to sleep as soon as they could. People are tired when they come in off the streets.

Some, however, would sit up and talk quietly in two areas set aside for smoking. Mario has lived in the city for

all of his 38 years; he drove a cab for 12 years; now, no job, no home. "But I'll get something." He doesn't look beaten. John, a neatly trimmed blond in his middle 20's, wearing a light sweater, clean shirt and carefully kept jeans, looks more tense. He moved from New York last summer for a job as an assistant office manager but lost it when he showed up two days late; he's been sleeping in the church for a couple of weeks, looking for work during the day. "One problem when you don't have a place to stay is keeping yourself presentable to look for a job," he

remarks. "And when they ask, 'Where can we call you?' I can't give them the church's phone number." Andy, a wispy youngster barely out of his teens, arrived in the city three weeks ago; he wears an AA battery hung from his left earlobe, and is so bewildered and exhausted that he breaks into laughter at odd moments while telling about tearing up his papers in a fit of impatience at the General Assistance office that morning. He asks to be awakened at 5 a.m. so he can go back with a new acquaintance who has promised to show him how to act, and try again. "If somebody doesn't give me

Homeless: The Power of Futility by John Poppy



As soon as evening meetings clear out of the Trinity Church parish hall, volunteer assistants have half an hour to set up 125 cots with blankets. Then they open the doors to homeless people who, without the support of this congregation, would spend the night on the streets.

some help I don't know what I'm going to do," he keeps saying.

"Get some rest so you can control yourself better," says Ken, a monitor. "Go on, now." Ken himself used to spend his nights sleeping on chairs at another shelter. Now he puts his experience in homelessness to work as a paid monitor here.

By 11:30 every cot was claimed and most of the occupants were asleep. On average, about 90% of them have completed high school, and 30% are college graduates. Somewhere between a third and a half are alcohol or drug abusers, are physically or mentally disabled, or are street-wise wanderers who aren't looking for work. More than two-thirds have held jobs that lasted more than a year. At a rough guess, more than half of them are immediately employable. Some are just out of luck, out of ideas, unsure of what has happened to them. Some, like Ken, figure that they put themselves where they are, one way or another, and plan to move on. "I ran the red light and I'm paying the ticket," is the way Ken put it.

By 8 a.m. the next morning everyone was up, had coffee and a brown-bag breakfast of hard-boiled egg, roll, and fresh fruit, and was back on the street. The guests in the church had received something else, too, in the way they had been treated: a bit of dignity. "Maybe it's only 2 or 3% more than they've felt somewhere else," Ken suggested, "but they take it out on the street with them. It sticks."

This is happening, as it is in other locations around the United States, at Trinity Episcopal Church in San Francisco. Last Dec. 1, Trinity became the first church in that city to offer overnight sleeping space to the homeless. Robert Cromey, the rector, knew that churches in other places such as Atlanta had started housing people several years ago, and set in motion the program in his own parish. Richard

Kerr, a volunteer associate priest at Trinity, made it happen, getting a pledge of \$20,000 from the city government for the first two months, finding supplies, recruiting staff and volunteers. The congregation of about 250, growing under a vigorous new ministry yet sometimes seeming outnumbered by its guests, firmly supports the presence of the guests. One churchgoer mobilized her catering service to provide the breakfasts. Others donated money they could scarcely spare, and time. The people of Trinity have shown extraordinary generosity and care.

It is all so decent, and good-hearted . . . and ineffective.

What will providing a warm place to sleep for 120 men a night do about the conditions that put them on the streets?

San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein made headlines in the local papers last fall when she started saying that her city, with a population of just 680,000, had 10,000 homeless people on its sidewalks and dark corners every night. The figure was recently revised to 4,000; the truth is, nobody knows the real number. But you can see the people wherever you go. Such estimates don't count the thousands of others who get free meals from the dining rooms and soup kitchens run by the churches and community groups.

"Feeding the hungry has become so big a task that it is stretching the resources of volunteer agencies." That statement comes not from some angry radical paper but from a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal*, which goes on to quote Karen Kordisch, head of the Hunger Task Force, a private group in Cleveland: "We're a Band-Aid and Cleveland is hemorrhaging." In Cleveland, San Francisco, and communities across the United States, the hungry and the homeless are younger than they used to be; many are women; more and more of the people at the soup kitchens are couples with children, ashamed to

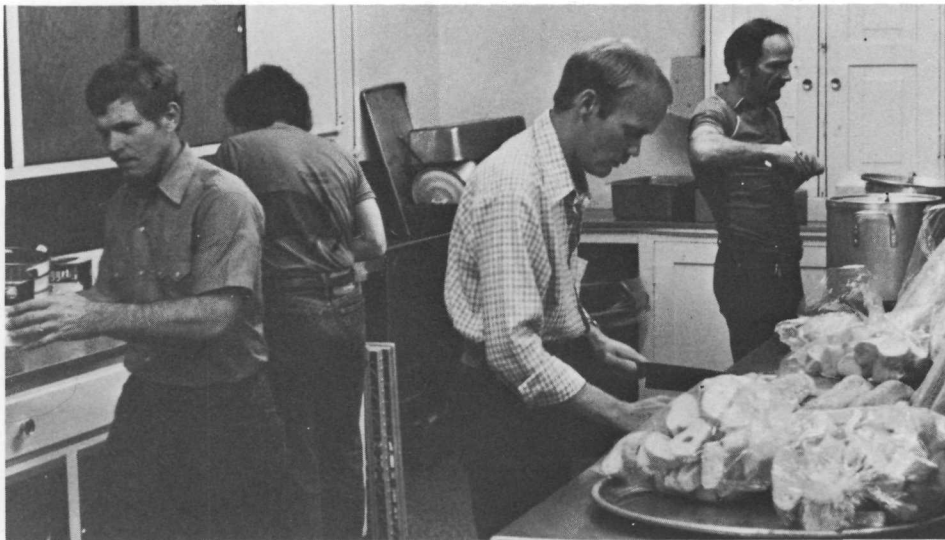
be asking for a free meal but grateful for something to tide them over while they look for work.

"At no time since the Great Depression," says the Community for Creative Non-Violence in Washington, D.C., "have the homeless poor represented so broad a cross-section of American society as they do today." Or such a large portion of us. The number of homeless persons in this most wealthy of all countries has risen, by some estimates, to at least 2 million.

What do the people in a church feel when they know they are just treating a symptom, while the disease, as far as they can see, gets worse? What do they feel about the impact an individual can have on the arms race? What can they do when they hear a sermon in which Trinity Rector Robert Cromey quotes Pope Paul VI: "Armaments kill the poor by causing them to starve"? What about big-city real-estate speculation? Cromey cites condominium conversions and soaring rents that price housing beyond the reach of many. What about a distorted distribution of wealth? Cromey notes that some people let food rot in storage while others go hungry. Last year the stock market rose 171 points, as the Boston *Globe's* columnist Ellen Goodman reminds us, while unemployment rose by 2.5 million. Are the congregations of churches like Trinity, even with the best of intentions, doing anything to fix the political and economic conditions that produce such discordant realities?

"We don't extend ourselves for other people because we're going to be effective," says Rick Kerr, who directs the Trinity shelter program. "We do it because there is no way to be a human being and not do it."

Robert Cromey speaks of a responsibility for *ministry* and for *prophecy*, intertwined. "Here are human beings who are not being taken care of; we'll do the best we can for them as a stopgap



Trinity Church volunteers hustle to produce a brown bag breakfast of hard-boiled egg, roll and fresh fruit for the homeless men who have slept at the parish hall the previous night.

measure. We all know that 1 Corinthians is where Paul tells us we are members of the body of Christ: 'And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.' We honor the poor by feeding them and giving them a place to sleep. But that is only *partially* honoring them. We also honor them by doing something about the conditions in society that keep them hungry and homeless.

"And that is where our ministry leads to prophecy. The ministry is a proclamation, a dramatic way to point out to the community that we've all got work to do. Remember the Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Micah: One of their ideas is to use prophecy not in the sense of predicting the future, as we say, 'Next Tuesday we're going to have rain' — but in the sense of pointing a direction for a people. The prophetic voice says, 'If you don't take care of the poor and the homeless and if justice isn't being done, this nation will fall.' We might not want to put the consequences in such dire terms, but the point is that there will be consequences."

That is the catch in what they are doing: the consequences.

They have no intention of making mere gestures. Rick Kerr's motive is not to be effective, it is to be human. Of course there is effectiveness in that. "It seems to me that the message of the New Testament and the witness of the church," he says, "is that God has handed over to humanity the responsibility to solve our problems, and the power to do it."

"Responsibility," says Crome, "can be translated as the ability to respond. You're only alive if you keep responding to what is happening around you. When I say I have a responsibility for the sun coming up in the morning, I don't mean that I cause it but that I can respond to it. That is a gift we all have."

During Communion, when Crome recites, "Do this in remembrance of me," he puts particular emphasis on "*remembrance*," driving home its dimension — beyond simply thinking about Jesus at the moment — of re-joining, being present with, one flesh with. "When we do Eucharist," he says in response to a parishioner's question, "we do it in remembrance of Christ, and

also we're re-membered with the homeless downstairs. We're joined with them symbolically, and we don't get to escape the connection with people in the world.

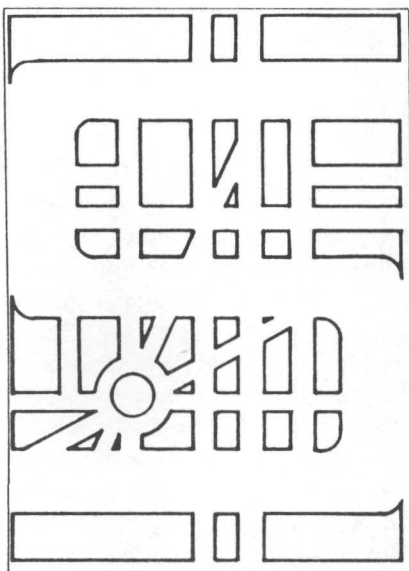
"The prophetic dimension comes naturally out of regular participation in the feeding of bread and wine. Of course we've got to feed people. Of course we've got to house people and take care of them. We are saying, day in and day out, week in and week out, 'We are being fed,' and therefore we ought to feed others."

Rick Kerr continues, "Social problems are soluble. For evidence, look at the elimination of slavery as an institution. Abraham took Hagar, his slave, to produce an heir, and it was not until 5,000 years later in the United States (less in some other countries) that slavery was repudiated as a moral possibility. But it did happen — and on religious grounds. Slavery was repudiated theologically before it was rejected politically."

Such politics as the church has, he suggests, are "the politics of total inclusiveness. No one is to be excluded. That gives us a unique opportunity to accomplish some things. Of course this is more theoretical than actual in the lives of many parishes and congregations. In this parish at this time, there is a radical openness — to the traditional and the new, to old people and young, from a few parishioners with wealth all the way to the many who have nothing, to gay and non-gay, and so on."

That assessment is accurate. Trinity is the oldest Episcopal church west of the Rockies, built by the rich burghers of San Francisco, and the congregation still includes members of old-line, traditional families. In addition, about a third of the congregation now is gay. They and the non-gay parishioners, certainly including most of its straight-laced older ones and the crusading rector, work harmoniously together.

Continued on page 14



Trinity Cathedral, Cleveland, marked its 75th anniversary last year with a festive service highlighting its role as a major institution with a long record of service to the needs of the city. Dean Perry R. Williams invited Donald Shriver, president of Union Theological Seminary, New York, to preach for the occasion.

Dr. Shriver outlined the biblical criteria of a great city, and explored the following "Trinitarian foundations." A great city, he said, is one where:

1. People have stopped worshipping idols, because they know and worship God, creator of earth and all creatures;
 2. People are organizing themselves to meet the earthly needs of the weakest citizens of the community; and
 3. In the hearts of people, hope for the future is winning out over despair.
- THE WITNESS agreed with Dean Williams that Dr. Shriver's sermon should be made accessible to all who care deeply about the repair and welfare of the cities.

The Mayor of Cleveland looked President Reagan in the eye and told him that Cleveland was in deep trouble. In a recent visit to the White House, as reported in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the Mayor said youth unemployment was up, and at least half of the minority youth were out of work. Man Power training funds were a third of what they were in 1979. Bankruptcies had doubled. And on the way to Washington he had met in a parking lot an ex-convict, an out-of-work machinist who could not find work and was having trouble accumulating the \$1.50 a day required to keep his alcoholic habit going. The Mayor, it is reported, told the President about this ex-convict. What will military might do for this country, he asked the President, if our cities are unable to rehabilitate such a man with a job and with treatment for his alcoholism?

Our cities, he said, need attention — not only their sewer and transportation systems, but their people as well. From that report, the Mayor sounds like a public leader who thinks that Cleveland is in need of repair. That puts him in the biblical ballpark.

Down through history cities have been great centers of idolatry. That is why on many of its pages the Bible seems to read like an anti-urban tract. In early, medieval, and modern urban history, one confronts a series of reasons for the founding of cities that are not very attractive to the prophets. The first city in Israel's memory was mythological Babel, city of the proud tower, built to celebrate the clever achievements of humans who were quite willing to forget that theirs was a life received from God

To Repair the

the Creator. Babel, Israel remembered, collapsed of its own weight of pride.

Then there were the historical cities of that memory: Thebes, Memphis, Pithom and Raamses, the shrine cities of Egypt, where the Pharaohs ruled as gods and enslaved people like the Hebrews to build tombs meant to last forever — more towers of Babel, of course. Further into their historical memory, the imperial cities of Nineveh, Babylon, and finally Rome — all monuments to the human lust for power, all of them grinding little nations under their heels.

Can anything good come out of cities? Israel's historic experience made the prophets wonder. Even Jerusalem, allegedly God's favorite city, becomes the center of corrupt religion and equally corrupt politics. "It is not possible for a prophet to perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33) said Jesus, and he said it with a sigh: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill prophets . . . how often have I longed to gather your children as a hen gathers her brood under her wings . . ." They threw him out of Nazareth, but they killed him in Jerusalem.

Not a very optimistic picture of human life in cities.

But strange saving events are associated with many of these same corrupt cities. Prophets from Amos to Jeremiah insisted on preaching in the midst of cities like Bethel and Jerusalem. And there, in the midst of Jerusalem, we find apostles preaching "Jesus and the resurrection," because this Jesus, risen from the dead, instructed them that they are so to preach, "in Jerusalem" (Acts 1:8) — to make a new start in this human adventure, beginning in the place where some of the worst in humanity

Ruined Cities

by Don Shriver

had come to expression. Run away to preach the Good News in the countryside? Retreat to the suburbs? Not by the grace of God you won't. *Beginning* in Jerusalem.

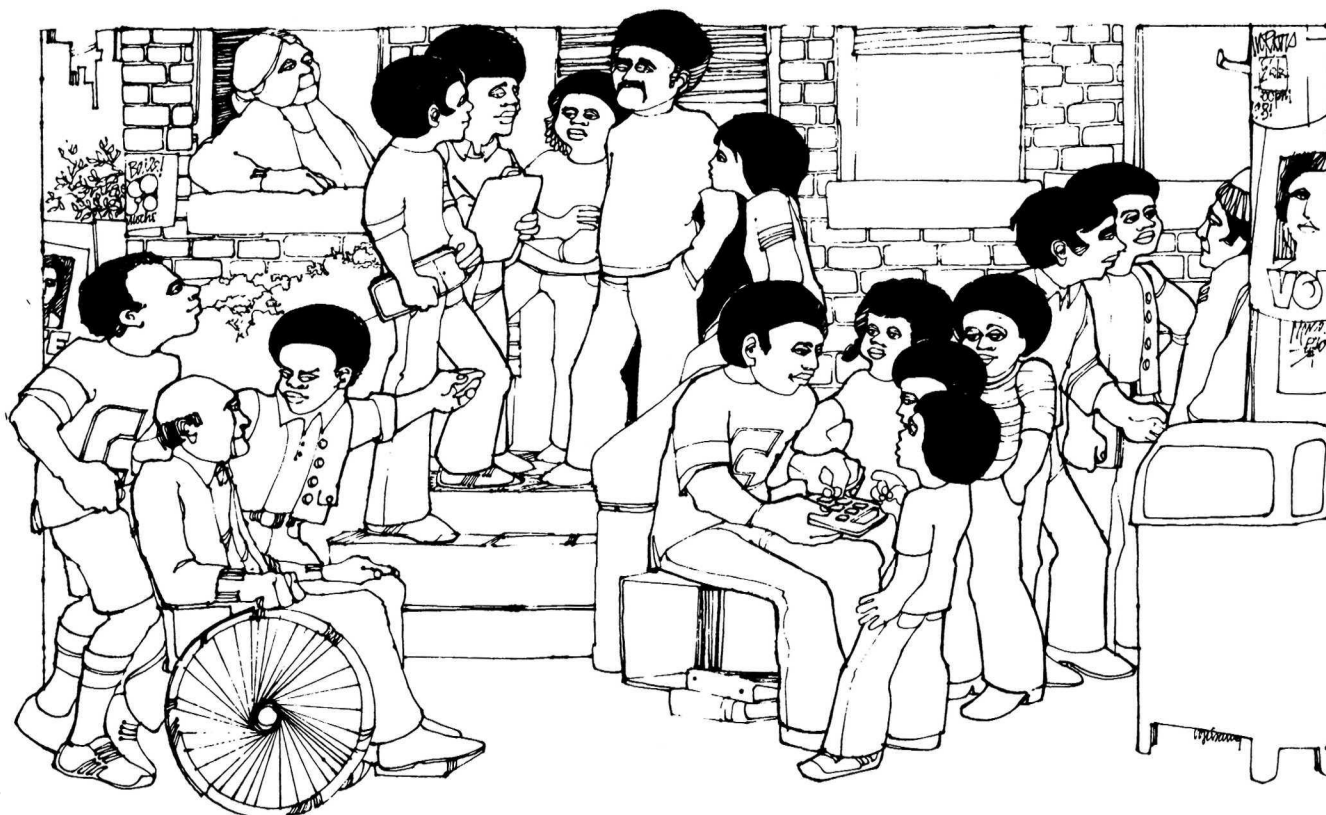
Before a dozen generations of Christians had done their share of obeying those apostolic instructions, the great Imperial Whore of Babylon, Rome the Idolatrous, decided officially to give up its idolatry. It made peace with the Christians, who until then — 312 A.D. — were going to the lions because they were no more willing to worship Caesar than their Hebrew ancestors were willing to worship Pharaoh.

All this led to the possibility of building human cities around some other principle than the worship of idols. The

medieval city, that *bourg* built with stout walls, was a theological improvement on the Babylons and Romes of old. The walls protected nobility and the aristocratic system of the time, but it also protected even the country serfs from the full brunt of international anarchy. If a cathedral tower sprouted there, pointing upward to the Great God of the Universe, how could idolatry flourish quite so readily as before?

Then there was the market-city of the Renaissance, built from the collaborations of princes and middle-class merchants — the middle class, that built its houses outside the walls of the fortified city, in between the aristocrats and the country peasantry. And that is where a long history lesson arrives at last at the history of Cleveland, Ohio.

The cities of this American continent are late arrivals in this 5000-year-old history. The people who came here beginning in the 16th century, were almost all merchants-in-the-making: they came to build Boston, Norfolk, Philadelphia, Savannah, Albany and all-points-west on the Erie Canal. The people who founded my home town of Norfolk needed a port for shipping out their peanuts and tobacco from the upriver plantations. Then they needed the same port, expanded, for shipping out the West Virginia coal. Memphis was the city that cotton built; Chicago, "Toolmaker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads" for the westward trek of Europeans across the Great Plains. And Cleveland: the city of interlocked ships and rail lines, the city that steel



built and machine tools, too.

This nation of cities — who built them, if not mostly poor people with an ache in their bones never to be poor again?

Historically and spiritually speaking, we are up to the present moment. But we have not left the first theological point: the danger of idolatry in urban life. If you think that idolatry is no longer a danger to the people of modern secular urban America, look again. In the early 1970s my family lived in a housing subdivision inside the city limits of Atlanta. A social agency in town, working with “problem” teenagers referred to them by the courts, decided that suburban living was an influence towards normality in American society. (By moving there, our family showed its agreement with that assumption.) So the agency took steps to buy a home on our block, to make a “halfway home” for a couple and four or five of these young people. Not all of these teenagers, of course, would necessarily have white faces. There were 15 homes on our block. Could you not write the scenario that followed? Thirteen of the 15 families organized to block the purchase of that home by the social agency. Failing to do that immediately, they made the atmosphere of the neighborhood so bitter that no social workers would bring even slightly disturbed teenagers into such a place. So the agency backed out.

If you had surveyed those 13 families, they would have said, “It would hurt our property values.” What would you call the fear in that statement, and the racism and classism hiding under it? From a biblical perspective, you would have to call it *the sin of caring for money more than for needy people*.

How is it in Cleveland on such a point? More righteous than Atlanta?

American cities are segregated by race and class, more so now than a mere 75 years ago when this cathedral was a-building. More than ever in the history

of cities on this continent, income determines where we live, who our neighbors will be. There is no iron law that requires this. People of different income levels could live close together, especially if we had an ethic and an economic-political commitment to make it so — and a real estate industry encouraged by the market (that is, customers like most of us) to work with weak people to make them stronger.

To do this we would have to go along with maxims like the one Jesus repeated to the Devil, that old Idolater: “Humans do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4) To do this we would have to call a halt to the notion

“Down through history cities have been great centers of idolatry. That is why on many of its pages the Bible seems to read like an anti-urban tract. In early, medieval, and modern urban history one confronts a series of reasons for the founding of cities that are not very attractive to the prophets.”

that property values are sacred in the organization of human affairs. And the notion that the most human life is one with the lowest taxes. For love of lower taxes many of us are willing to tolerate second-class public schools, understaffed police forces, poor sanitation, and more air pollution than any human habitation should tolerate.

Why not higher taxes, if we can find a way to use them for the rehabilitation of drunks and drug-addicts and homeless poor people, all of whom are as human as anyone else in this society? I like what Mayor George Voinovich said to President Reagan the other day; but with his colleagues in the state legisla-

ture, he would have said such things even more forcefully if he could say them backed up by the loud voice of a high proportion of the people who are attending church and synagogue. I think of a state legislator, a woman, in Connecticut who recently said to an interviewer: “One church lobbyist up here doesn’t mean anything to me because I’m not sure many people are behind him . . . what it takes is signed statements from parishes that are involved in a given issue — the grass roots people. If I had 500 signatures from different churches . . . people saying, ‘I support the call to make decent housing for the poor through these methods . . .’, you know, with all those signatures, we could get something done up here (in Hartford).”

Sad to confess, one trouble with American political life is that the dividing line between those who worship idols and those who worship the Lord is likely to run right through many a Christian congregation. A recent survey sponsored by the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company concludes that people most actively religious in America are the ones most enthusiastic about keeping the United States *militarily* superior to the rest of the world. Do we rest easy in this association of religion in America with the power of guns? It is enough to make one suspect that religion is not necessarily a good thing. The prophets thought it was not, for it could easily be the clothing of idolatry.

No wonder, then, that in the final book of the Bible, *Revelation*, the ultimate future of the world is pictured as a future without organized religion. The wonder is that, in this allegedly anti-urban Bible, the future is finally imaged precisely as a *city*, “come down from heaven.” There in that City of God, religion will have done its creaturely work in the old world. What we have then is the human community, repaired

and restored, living in a truly great city. At the center of that city, not a temple, not an idol, but "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." A little lamb, enthroned in the place where religion and government and commerce might have liked to have been enthroned, but now they all are allocated the status of worshippers. The center of the real city stands revealed: an innocent lamb from the countryside, reminiscent of the "meek" who have now "inherited the earth." Humility and love have at last come into their own. *Compassion rules.*

So there is the second great anticipation of the City of God among the human cities. A city within hailing distance of the City of God is one where the least of these, the brothers and sisters of Jesus, have become the objects of neighborly compassion. Chapters 24 and 25 of Matthew indicate the human action that best anticipates the Lamb's rule of the world comes down to mundane things like water, food, shelter, medical care, and decent prisons. It's what politics and economics ought to be about, from here to eternity.

Humane urban politics will always be about arranging this and every city as places where the weak and the meek and the down-and-out *get included* in the human community. Hubert Humphrey had the Christian flavor of it when he said, "The moral test of government is what it does for people in the dawn of life — childhood; the twilight of life — old age; and the shadows of life — bad fortune in all its forms."

To pass that moral test every single citizen may have to engage in a mighty struggle to sift the facts from the fancies of politics, and to rearrange collective priorities that will always be in dispute in any nearly-democratic society. Consider that the new F-18 fighter program of our national government will cost just about the amount of money cut recently from the welfare budget — lots

of struggle over priorities there. But what is the relation of our religion to our politics if not an invitation to a form of spiritual struggle known in the Bible as repentance?

And the repentance might as well begin in the churches. Ten years ago in Atlanta, an elder of the Presbyterian church, who made his living in the construction industry, pondered the problem of land-availability for the building of low-and-moderate income housing. He discovered that some of the largest landowners in the suburbs were churches. He went to a number of large suburban Presbyterian congregations with the question, "Would you consider using some of your spacious church sites as locations for subsidized housing for low and moderate income people?" No, we will not, said they, one and all,

"This nation of cities — who built them, if not mostly poor people with an ache in their bones never to be poor again?"

Presbyterians, mind you, who are supposed to believe, with John Calvin, that the world is the "theater of God's glory."

Don't tell me that religion is the solution to all of Atlanta's or Cleveland's problems! One of our cities' problems is religion — its institutions, its people. What we worship in fact is not always what we worship in name.

Jesus came into the world to give us strength and hope for doing what we are supposed to do and have not yet done. The message to the church and to the world, is not: "You ought to be good!" But: "God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:17) What the world needs so obviously is not religion, but the power of that Holy Spirit who brought creation

out of chaos, who inspired the prophets as a minority to believe that the majority were capable of repentance, and who raised Jesus from the dead so that the confidence of his disciples might shift from their despairing selves to the God of heaven who means that God's will be done on earth.

Faith, love, and hope are the great words for a great city. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the bearers and sustainers of the reality in those words. Such faith and love and hope must sustain us in our struggle with all the other realities that yield the Houghs, the South Bronxes, and the South Sides of our American city. Facing them, it is quite indispensable for Christians to confess: "Nothing shall separate us or our city from a love that never lets us go. Death is not the final word of God upon this city, but *life*."

What does all this say about the active ministry of a cathedral to the life of a city like this? The possibilities are clear; but they all involve forms of collaboration between the churches and other human organizations. The church's part in the making of a great city can at least start in a certain ministry of words. It's not enough, but it is a start, especially if the words are brimful with facts and straight-aimed at issues of urgent public policy. They did another study in Hartford, Conn. in 1980, interviewing 44 prominent political and business leaders of that city. "What do you expect from the churches?" they asked. Almost unanimously, the 44 replied: *More leadership on public issues*. By "churches" they meant whole congregations, not just ministers. Said one local politician: "People don't realize that when a congregation puts its mind to something it's remarkable what it can do . . . Federal grants come and go . . . the city government, too . . . but the church will be there . . . Churches are one of the few

institutions where we have honest-to-God free speech."

At the very least the church should be debating, among its own members, what it can do institutionally to supply the ailing cities of our land with a few parables, a few shining examples of what a great city, a repaired city might look like. The Community Development Fund of this cathedral and the Lutheran Housing Federation of this city are on the track of such parables. Here is another, full of encouragement, from the Borough of Brooklyn, New York:

A coalition of 36 local churches in several devastated neighborhoods of Brooklyn has developed what it calls a "Nehemiah Plan." Nehemiah, you remember, rebuilt Jerusalem after the Babylonian invasions. The Babylonians didn't fall upon Brooklyn — just the "natural" workings of the housing market which over a generation or two can turn mansions into slums in any American city. These modern-day Nehemiahs are bent on building 5000 new townhouses for low and moderate income families. They have assembled a loan fund of \$12 million for the first 1000 homes, from their own congregational and denominational resources. With this "challenge fund" in hand, they recently went to the New York City government for an additional loan of \$10 million. As quoted by the *New York Times*, a city official said: "No group has ever come to us like that before. Basically they said, 'We've got our \$12 million; what have you got?' What else could we say?" And a local housing expert said: "They haven't got the remaining 4000 homes covered yet . . . The Federal government has disappeared as a housing-aid resource, and Albany is a poor man's town. (But) The thousand homes are a good starting point — big enough to convince people that the effort is not a toy but small enough to be manageable."

Neither Isaiah nor Jesus would be surprised. Both would rejoice:

*"They shall build the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations."* (61:4) ■

Boycott Goal in Sight

An action against Taster's Choice coffee, which commenced March 1, may turn out to be the last step in the international boycott of Nestle products.

Inaugurated in 1977 by INFACT (the Infant Formula Action Coalition) the boycott has already impelled Nestle to announce its compliance with the World Health Organization Code of Marketing for Breast Milk Substitutes and to create a Compliance Audit Commission chaired by former Secretary of State Edmund Muskie.

In spite of this, monitors in developing countries continue to report infractions by the company. Advertising and free samples (prohibited by the Code) still persuade mothers to shift from breast milk to infant formula. Many of them use unsanitary containers, which may produce diarrhea; others over-dilute the formula because they cannot afford adequate supplies.

The company is now conferring with representatives of the International Boycott Committee. Thus, there are grounds for hope that the intensified action against Taster's Choice, one of its leading money-makers in this country, will produce agreement and full compliance with the Code.

— Mary Jane Baker, Chair
Committee on Corporate Responsibility
Episcopal Church Publishing Co.

CREDITS

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Homeless . . . Continued from page 9

The shelter program, in fact, is administered almost entirely by gay men — a deliberate decision by Rick Kerr, to make the point that "the gay community is a reservoir of wholesome, intelligent people who have real expertise in human services and human crisis which needs to be engaged for the health of the whole community." The response of even the most conventional-minded among their fellow parishioners has been, in effect, "Keep up the good work and what can I do to help? It's going to take all of us to get this done."

Kerr concludes, "When that radical openness — that catholicity — is truly experienced on the local level, it can break through traditions that have become encrusted and no longer serve the human race. It can make a new statement.

"Allowing so many voices to be heard enables us to speak with power. Obviously I mean not practical political power, but moral or spiritual power."

Yet not necessarily ineffective power. The Trinity congregation has been touched by what it is doing, in ways that could make it a model for others. Their bishop noticed what they were doing, and Grace Cathedral in San Francisco started taking in the homeless at night; so did a Baptist congregation, and a Lutheran. You can see at Trinity's post-Communion coffee hour that the people have a mission, and are glad of it. The retired secretary who gave \$1,000 of her savings to the shelter program before the first city check arrived, "in case you need a little spending money," is elated, even though she doesn't think she did anything special.

What really makes you stop and think about all this is the ordinariness of the people. They are just paying attention to their responsibility; nothing extraordinary about us, they say. But the light we all see by would be much dimmer without them. ■

An Explosion of Love

by Joan Trafecanty

Perhaps it could only happen in the highly impersonal setting of a sprawling city. Down some anonymous lane a young girl's lifeless body is discovered — the victim, they say, of four strangers looking for a brief respite from boredom. Five months after the burial, a form letter — like an intrusive afterthought — summons the parents to the Coroner's Office to claim "the personal property that was found on the decedent." With practiced indifference a silent employee shakes out the contents of a 7 x 11 manila envelope onto the ancient green mat behind the iron grille. Three twisted and broken dime store rings and a plastic hairbrush. The last remains of a life . . .

It was on June 16, 1982, that our 14-year old daughter, Tammy Jo Trafecanty, was raped and murdered, her violated body dumped in a field in Compton. The death certificate listed the cause of death as "gunshot wounds to the head."

Unidentified, she lay in the morgue for a month. On July 17, when two policemen knocked at our door and asked the family to assemble, we knew in an instant that Tammy was dead. We had had many visits from police officers before, but they had always had Tammy in tow, the sullen culprit roaming the streets at improbable hours of the night.

Tammy was an adopted child, a fact

which she absorbed with hidden rage. The first time we saw her she was a bright and lively 4-year old feeding the ducks in Reseda Park with the social worker who had brought her to meet us. She had cautioned the caseworker that "you better not make me go with those people." But after several hours of sly adult maneuvering, Tammy was persuaded to remain in our home. The strategy was to convince her that she had helped choose her new parents, but she wasn't fooled. She knew in her heart she didn't want to be our daughter. From the beginning, she shut herself away from us, but this did not become clear until many years later.

The months passed and Tammy learned to adapt to her new family. She made friends easily and was extremely active. She loved to charge down the sidewalk on roller skates, sliding to a perfect stop on the front steps of our house. There were problems. She was "sneaky," a tendency later analyzed by a psychologist as "passive aggressive" behavior, a way of covertly expressing anger. She stole small things, told lies, only obeyed when she was being watched. We felt guilty because we found it difficult to care much for this child, but it was only later that we came to understand that she was unconsciously inviting our rejection.

We hoped that our move to an Hispanic neighborhood would be a good thing for Tammy, but it merely widened the gulf between us. She was embarrassed to explain to her new friends how she, with her Latin looks, had come to be in this Anglo family. She had her joyful moments — winning a

swimming medal, skating with her class at the *Great Skate*, gaily flirting with a good-looking admirer. She took an interest in many of the guests who came to the Catholic Worker. She would sit on the porch of Hennacy House talking to them for hours.

When Tammy was 12, she began to hang out with kids who were as confused and reckless as she was. We went to great lengths to control her behavior but it became apparent that we would only be able to do this if we used a lock and key. One night she jumped out of the bathroom window. Tony chased her for several blocks but she disappeared into the heavy brush beside the freeway. Even the police hesitated to enter this dangerous area, frequented by gang members and vagrants. When they finally went in to search for her, she had long since escaped. After that, she rarely spent more than a few days at home. We soon discovered that Los Angeles has no viable programs to curb the incorrigible runaway.

It was difficult to fathom the depths of rage which drove her to wander, penniless and dirty, completely dependent on the good will of strangers. Sometimes sleeping under houses, stealing clothes off clotheslines — could she really prefer this lifestyle? She lived her own version of voluntary poverty. She appeared to have only a vague attachment to the things of this world, and gradually most of her clothes and belongings were left behind in various temporary sanctuaries throughout the city. Last month when I went to the Coroner's Office to pick up the "property" that had been found on her body, it

Joan Trafecanty is editorial assistant in the Church and Society office, Los Angeles. She and her husband, Tony, and their five children live at the Los Angeles Catholic Worker, where she co-edits the Worker paper, *The Catholic Agitator*.

seemed pathetic but fitting that there were just a few worthless trinkets.

She spent a year in a juvenile probation camp. It was a good time for her. A controlled environment forced her to settle down a little. She learned to like herself better, but even daily counseling could not help her face the pain of past memories. As soon as she was released she began to wander again.

Our struggles with Tammy have taught me that love is not necessarily a cozy emotion, nor are painful conflicts always possible to resolve. One of the vivid memories of my childhood is of the occasions when my family would watch a movie or TV show in which the involved tribulations of the protagonists were somehow neatly and happily resolved in the end. As the credits flashed on the screen, my father would rise from his seat and inquire in a mischievous tone: "Now didn't that come out all nice and tidy?" The message was that, in his experience, life was a lot less manageable.

I suppose the wisdom of this decade would say that it would have been better if Tammy's existence had ended in her mother's womb. But despite all the pain, I can't agree that her life was expendable. I'm glad that she lived. I'm glad that we struggled together. The implications of her sojourn with us will always haunt me. Our relationship never really worked and perhaps never could have. But I'm ready to accept the premise that life's struggles seldom come out "all tidy." Human love frequently fails, and sometimes we must let that failure fall into Mystery.

At her graveside service, Father Roger gently reminded us that Tammy had suffered Christ's passion and ignominious death and that she was now most certainly resurrected with Him. "At the moment of her death, she met an explosion of love." Let it be so. In her own troubled way, that was what Tammy was always searching for. ■

'Weatherization Ministry

Scenes from last winter: A smooth, unbroken line of tube caulk on a cracked door frame and the exuberant smile of a retired church deacon who thought he was only good with words . . . the sheen of drum-tight plastic being fastened over a window by two 13-year-olds who've been intently concentrating for 20 minutes straight (unheard of even in basketball!) . . . a single mother learning to use six fingers at once to apply rope caulk to one of her windows and laughing because there are at least 10 other family and church members with her doing the same thing on a snowy afternoon . . . and a circle of prayer at the end of a training session with church members spontaneously lifting up thanks and expressing their hope of serving others with the newly learned abilities.

These glimpses of one group's experience in weatherization training reflect the dynamics of a practical and loving ministry originated in the Boston metropolitan area. It is a ministry by Christians for Urban Justice (CUJ).

CUJ was founded in 1976 and moved to Codman Square, Dorchester, Mass. in 1978. There it began its neighborhood ministries and helped to establish and maintain a Community Development Corporation. Currently CUJ is developing a network of over 100 inner-city churches for mutual support and Christian community development, and its weatherization service has become an urban model for building love within communities.

Christians for Urban Justice trains and enables churches to strengthen the needy, starting within their own church families. It has begun in the area of housing, especially low-cost energy conservation; and its goal is church-based economic development. Through



A tenant: "The peace I felt during the training session wasn't like what I usually feel working on jobs like that with others. No one was aware of occupations; we could have been doctors, lawyers, or anybody, but while we worked we were all one. Not only did we learn how to weatherize, but we got the right materials to continue with our own work. Now I know I can do it myself." (Sarah Small, Roxbury, Mass.)

seminars, internships, retreats, and publications, CUJ teaches God's whole concern for all of creation's reconciliation to God and to each other, justice, stewardship, healing, and the abundant spiritual life.

Roger Dewey, CUJ's executive director and president of the local merchants' association, emphasizes that "it's hard for an urban church to be strong when so many in its congregation are poor." "Each winter," says Dewey, "some people in our churches go without heat or spend most of their money to buy fuel." Recognizing this

Helps People to Save

need, CUJ has developed a program of teaching small groups within congregations to do basic weatherization. This enables them to teach the rest of their congregation, leading to a church-wide *Weatherization Day*.

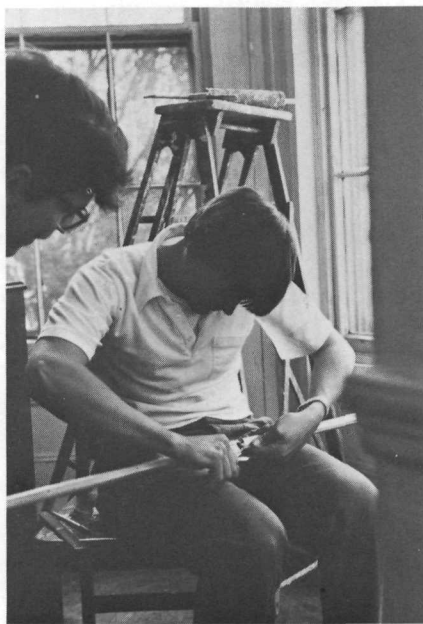
Churches are encouraged to use these new skills as part of their youth programs and adult fellowships and as a creative evangelistic outreach to their neighborhoods. To support such actions, CUJ has an emergency fund for assisting churches in subsidizing the cost of oil or weatherization materials for their poorest members. Also, rooms full of displays at CUJ's headquarters clearly explain how people can save on the cost of home heating by spending time and a little money. Exhibits include emergency and no-cost measures, low-cost options, insulation, furnace efficiency, insulating window shades, shutters, passive solar heat, and low-cost greenhouses.

"Our hope," adds Dewey, "has confirmed again and again that this service will affect more than just room temperatures, for learning stewardship at this level of need becomes a vital and liberating event." One participant, upon learning that a tube of caulk had to be punctured before it could operate, exclaimed, "Oh! That's why mine never worked!" Another's immediate ability to squeeze out an even line of tube caulk amazed others working with him, and then they learned that his was the experienced trigger-pull of a police officer. A Weatherization Day brings together diverse individuals, and they experience community as one of loving concern.

In preparation for their Weatherization Day, volunteers from Dorchester Temple Baptist Church received training from CUJ, which also helped in selecting apartments for the group to weatherize.

On a given Saturday, the church's teams, composed of three persons, gathered at the church and prayed for wisdom, for personal safety, and for their witness to the non-Christian members of the families into whose apartments they were going. They reminded each other that their work actually would be a form of worship. Together they sang: "*We will work with each other. We will work side by side. We will guard each one's pride. And they will know we are Christians by our love . . .*"

It was dark by the time the last of the groups had finished their assigned apartments, and it had begun snowing. It grew much colder that night; it was the first major storm of the winter.



A trainee: After our training, with about \$30, we turned a disaster of drafts, colds, and enormous heating bills into a comfortable home. It had sizable fuel savings after half a winter. I feel I have a valuable ministry tool that can help meet people's real needs in a way that complements a spiritual ministry." (Peter Furth, Dorchester Fellowship)

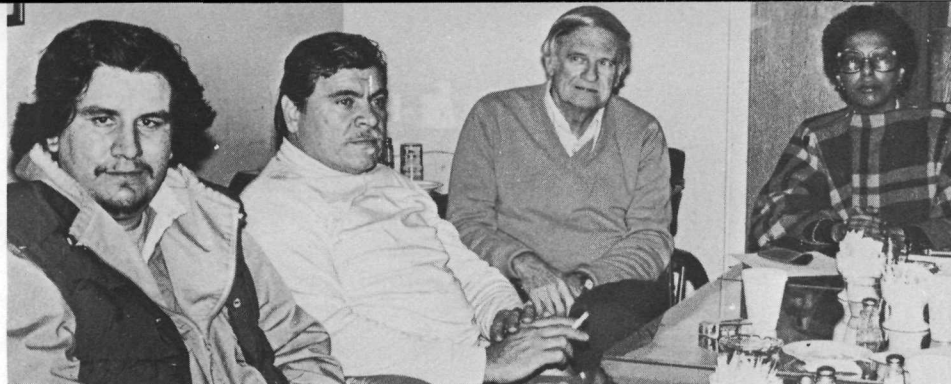
The next day the pastor of Dorchester Temple Baptist Church asked for testimonies from those who had been involved in Weatherization Day. People spoke in praise and gratitude for 20 minutes. One woman told how her husband had pitched in when a team visited their house. "He never attends church," she said, "but yesterday he met some Christians who are men he could relate to."

Others shared that they had no idea how much warmth could be saved by a sheet of plastic and some rope caulk. A woman said that she and her son learned enough to do work for themselves next year. Another woman told how she first hesitated to use a caulking gun and then learned, doing a good job and feeling better about herself and her abilities. "The Weatherization Day was one small but fantastic step for our church," said the Rev. Daniel Buttry, "and because we had the help of volunteers from other churches, we started building relationships with other Christians and established a sense of family across racial lines."

Roger Dewey states that CUJ's weatherization service has brought many different groups together, including eight members of an African Methodist Episcopal brotherhood, a youth team from a Baptist church, a contingent from a Pentecostal denomination, and many others — women and men, young and old, White, Black, and West Indian. Some have come for information, and many others have completed two training sessions and have gone on to organize their church's own weatherization efforts.

For further information about CUJ's weatherization service, readers should write Christians for Urban Justice, 563A Washington Street, Dorchester, MA 02124.

(Reprinted with permission from *Cities magazine*, July/August 1982.) ■



Defendants Steven Guerra and Julio Rosado with the Rt. Rev. Coleman McGehee and the Rev. Barbara Harris, chair and vice-chair of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company.



Defendants Maria Cueto of Los Angeles and Ricardo Romero, of Alamosa, Col. Missing from photos, Andres Rosado of New York.

Hispanics Await Jail Sentences Mary Lou Suhon

As THE WITNESS went to press, Judge Charles P. Sifton was to impose sentences April 8 on five Hispanics declared guilty of criminal contempt for refusing to testify before a Federal Grand Jury in Brooklyn. The five include Maria Cueto, former director of the National Commission on Hispanic Affairs of the Episcopal Church, and Steven Guerra, of the Board of Directors of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company.

The Grand Jury has been convened to investigate bombings perpetrated by the FALN, an alleged terrorist group, but in that process, the defendants claim, the Grand Jury is being used in a witch hunt to destroy all legal groups advocating Puerto Rican independence.

An anonymous jury — its members unknown to the defense and prosecution as well as to the public — deliberated almost two days before delivering a verdict. The jury also advised the court that they believed the five were guilty of a "serious" crime — one appropriately punished by more than six months in prison. The Government has announced that it is seeking prison sentences of 10 years, even though four of the five have served previous sentences on civil contempt charges for a similar offense.

Defense lawyers contend that such a heavy sentence is virtually unprecedented for criminal contempt, and

represents an effort by the Government to punish the Hispanics for crimes with which they have never been charged. The sentence for criminal contempt is at the discretion of the judge, the only limit being "cruel and unusual punishment." The defense also argued that selection of an anonymous jury created the impression that the defendants themselves were involved in violence, even though the criminal charge is limited to refusal to testify.

Judge Sifton had explained to the jurors that the case "did not involve charges that the five were members of the FALN," but even the press had difficulty recognizing that non-cooperation with a Grand Jury is not the equivalent of membership in the FALN.

A headline in the *New York Times* during the trial read, "Nameless Jurors Selected in Trial of 5 in FALN," and the first paragraph in a *News* story referred to "the trial of five accused FALN leaders charged with contempt for refusing to answer Grand Jury questions about FALN bombings." The FBI had issued a more damaging press release earlier labeling the five as "the unincarcerated leadership of the FALN."

Defense lawyer Michael Deutsch called upon the Government during the course of the trial to indict the defendants if it had evidence of criminal wrongdoing, to allow them to defend

themselves. "These people have been called to court and separated from their families and communities eight times in 15 months, and this is cruel and unusual punishment in itself," he said.

The New York Times reported Feb. 17 that the Government had asked for a criminal contempt prosecution before a jury "both to punish the five for refusing to testify before a Grand Jury and to deter others from refusing to testify."

"They are using us to set a precedent," said Julio Rosado, a Puerto Rican defendant who conducted his own defense. "Deterrent is a term we recognize from the nuclear lexicon. The Government is not going to deter us from our political beliefs. We insist that the independence of Puerto Rico is more properly settled in the political arena between the U.S. Government and Puerto Ricans. The status of Puerto Rico has not been juridically determined, and the courts are not the framework in which to carry on the discussion."

Four Episcopal bishops and three lay persons testified as character witnesses for the Hispanics during the eight-day trial (see March WITNESS).

Some frequently asked questions about the case of the five and the Grand Jury are discussed on page 19 by Richard W. Gillett of the Church and Society Network, Los Angeles, contributing editor to THE WITNESS. ■

Critical Questions in the Grand Jury Case

1. *Why don't they talk if they don't know anything?*

The five are deeply convinced that they are being summoned not as part of a good faith investigative process but because the government is using the Grand Jury against them for political purposes. In their view it wants to cause a "chilling effect" upon all protest movements which advocate independence for Puerto Rico. They believe that agreeing to talk before the Grand Jury would begin an open-ended questioning process leading to irreparable breaches of trust and the engendering of suspicion and disillusionment among proponents of independence for Puerto Rico. They share the experience and beliefs of many minorities and many women in this country who have little confidence in the ability of the state's police officers to pursue justice without regard to race, economic status, or political beliefs. They remember, among other examples, Huey Newton and Fred Hampton of the Black Panthers, peace activist Leslie Bacon, Martin Luther King's experience with the FBI, and the attitudes of Congress and many other public institutions during the McCarthy era.

2. *Why is the Grand Jury a questionable instrument of justice?*

The Governing Board of the National Council of Churches adopted a resolution on Grand Jury abuse in 1977. It stated in part:

"The Grand Jury is envisioned in American law as a protector of citizens from unwarranted prosecutions. It is for this reason that its proceedings are secret and it has compulsory process for summoning witnesses. However, in recent years there is evidence to indicate that its great powers have sometimes been misused to harass and intimidate political dissidents . . .

"Congress has never given the Federal Bureau of Investigation subpoena powers, yet agents today routinely threaten uncooperative persons with subpoenas from a Grand Jury, and often indeed serve such subpoenas upon them.

"It is the Governing Board's firm conviction that the use of the Grand Jury's powers as an instrument of investigation in support of law enforcement rather than as an evaluator of evidence already gathered is a distortion of its quasi-judicial function. The use of the Grand Jury's powers to harass and pursue political dissidents is a departure from its proper constitutional function, and is a great

threat to public order, lawful government and true domestic security."

3. *Is Puerto Rico's independence really a feasible option?*

That may be the wrong question in the near-term. The pertinent current questions to explore may be: What effects are the overwhelming Americanization of the economy and U.S. governmental presence having upon the social, economic and political life of the Puerto Rican people? And, what is the impact of the increasing military presence of U.S. nuclear and non-nuclear forces there? In the last few years American news media have warned of sharply rising unemployment (about 23% by *official* standards), growing dependency upon federal programs, and the paralyzed Puerto Rican government. They have not been as faithful in revealing that Puerto Rico is being greatly strengthened as a military "megafortress" against so-called subversive elements in the Caribbean and Central America. It is against such a backdrop that the larger questions of an historical, cultural and political colonialism — long acceptable as legitimate debate for African and Asian nations formerly attached to European powers — begin to present themselves in the case of the relationship of Puerto Rico to our own country. If one comes at the "Puerto Rican problem" with such questions, it is not inconceivable that political independence for Puerto Rico becomes a respectable position to advocate.

4. *Why are some in the church supporting the stand of the five?*

At the heart of the Christian gospel is the expressed concern of divine love for the powerless and marginalized of society. Jesus had stinging criticism for those in positions of power in both church and state who used that power for their own ends. Innumerable ecclesiastical pronouncements, ancient and modern, have upheld this tradition. But as were the disciples in Jesus' time, so too are we slow to believe that the institutions of society are capable of crushing dissent and maintaining the rights of the powerful. Without necessarily agreeing with every facet of their beliefs, we can steadfastly uphold the position of the Grand Jury resisters, and begin ourselves to understand the gross injustices existing in Puerto Rico which move them to such deep commitment.

R.W.G.

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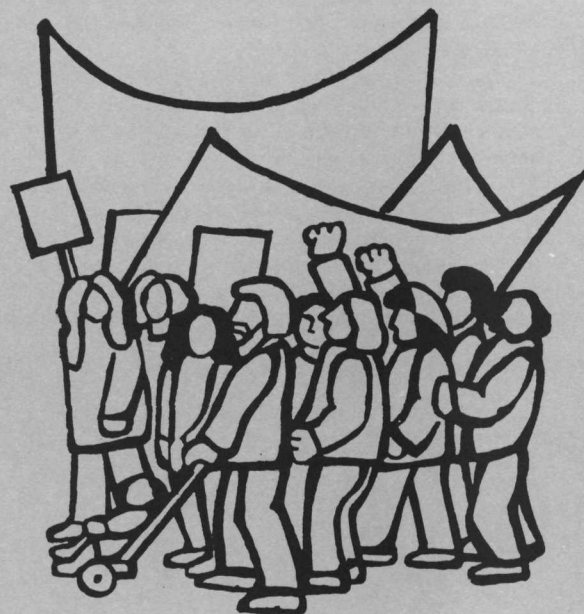
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