

THE Round Table

Spring

1985

“...a path from where we are to where we should be.” --Peter Maurin



**“Let The Little Children
Come To Me...”**

-Mark 10:14

Rampant substance abuse, not only in Black communities, but in American society, is developing into an uncontrollable illegal growth industry, and it must be addressed. There are burgeoning problems which also contribute towards the dismantling of the familial foundation because the age of experimentation with drugs and alcohol has plummeted into the elementary school levels. The reluctant acceptance of the need to discern the impact of chemical warfare on those who fought and were victimized by the War in Vietnam must be resolved. Generations of Black men who fought in Vietnam, particularly, have experienced continually a myriad of problems ranging from substance abuse to malaise.

**Black men who fought in Vietnam
have experienced a myriad
of problems...**

It is incumbent upon Black people through their community institutions to re-claim the legacy of strength inherited from the ancestry of slavery. It is incumbent upon Black communities to recognize that the current malaise is but a mirror of the large societal dysfunctioning and that Black institutions must define their developments, their adaptations and their responses in the context of the Afro-centric perspective rather than a Euro-centric perspective as long as racism and oppression remain the dominating societal forces.

America is reluctant to fully understand and celebrate the richness of its cultural plurality. The fear of loss of power and spheres of influence typify America's response to the demands for educational, economic and occupational equity. With the demographic trends suggesting that the urban centers will be relying more heavily upon racial minorities for workers as well as for positions of leadership, the mandate for Black families and Black communities to examine and adjust their political awareness and activism to assure equity and parity locally and an understanding of interrelated global issues is at hand. Black families must re-claim the grip on its family life and living patterns and practices. It must become the determinant force that shapes the values, that defines

the norms and dictates the diverse attitudes and behaviors which typify the community. Societal pressures and environmental conditions will consistently demand adaptations and adjustments within each strata. However, Black families must continue to recognize and re-assert that the future growth and capabilities of its communities are interdependent upon what they accomplish today along with or in spite of the larger society.

The family is the basic unit of all nations. the family structure has endured since recorded history. the family structure will continue to survive the sickness of the day... and if the nation is to live and prosper the family will live and endure because the nation is families united.

#34

Haki Madhubuti
Book of Life



INTERVIEWING OUR GUESTS:

A CHILD...

Interviewed by Ellen Rehg

RT: How old are you, Dione?

D: Eleven.

RT: Eleven years old?

D: Mmm-hmm.

RT: What school do you go to?

D: Jackson.

RT: Are you in fifth grade there?

D: Third. I'm in Crystal's room.

RT: Do you think it's easier to be a child or to be an adult?

D: A child, because you can learn more. Like when you go to school you can learn more than being an adult.

RT: What kinds of things do you learn?

D: Math, English, and spelling.

RT: What is the difference between being a child and being an adult?

D: Like, you get to stay here when your mama go out and stuff.

RT: What is something that an adult can do that you wish you could do?

D: Go a lot of places, like go to the show and stuff. Go cash a check and do all that.

RT: What is one thing you would do if you could that you can't do now?

D: Go stay with my Grandmas for the week-end. It's fun playing with my cousins and my brother. ...I went over to my other cousin house and I was fighting over there. See, when I was coming down the steps and my other little cousin was standing by the steps and I didn't know he was down there and I had knocked him down the steps, then he kicked me and I pulled him down the steps. And then when we got upstairs my other cousin jumped in and both of them tried to fight me. So that's why.

RT: Is it hard for you living at Karen House with your family?

D: Uh-uh. Uh-uh, it ain't hard. You get to go outside and play and when you go to school you get to do your homework and you have fun at school, do your work and stuff.

RT: What do you think adults should know about children that you don't think they do know?

D: They shouldn't leave their kids in the house by theyself because the house could catch on fire or a man could break in and try to rape they kids and they wouldn't even know, they be gone. They shouldn't do that, they should leave somebody with us or take us to the babysitter house.

RT: Do you know anybody that happened to? Kids that were left alone and got hurt like that?

D: My cousin got raped by this man...he took a rake and bust the window out and she was in her brother's house. Her brother was asleep, she was the only one awake and the man had got in there and tried to rape her and he did and then she called her mama and they told her and they moved over to Glasgow with they Grand-daddy. And my mama left us in the house one time by ourself. That time we called my cousin's house and said I be scared and then, see, we got this broken back door, but we be thinking that the dog could get the man and they be falling off the porch...the dog could make the man fall.... Everytime at night-time when I ain't got nobody to talk to I wake up my sister and to tell her I be scared to stay by myself. I be crying in the middle of the night, then I be falling asleep.

I don't like to stay by myself. That's why I tell my mama, "Take me with you." And she say, "No." Then I say, "Take me over to my cousin's house, then." And she takes me over there. If we got a ride.

And that's why people be getting raped and stuff, they leave their kids in the house. They say it on the news. And do you know what, the furnace might catch on fire. I be scared to stay in that house we staying in. I be scared. The lights went out one time and we had to sleep in the dark.

RT: That was the last house you stayed in?

D: Umm-hmm.

RT: How come you had to leave that house?

D: They was fixing to redem (sic) the house?

RT: Condemn it?

D: Umm-hmm. That's why my mama said she wanted to move out.

RT: Do you know why the house was condemned?

D: 'Cause they wouldn't come out and fix the furnace, the bath tub was stopped up and we used the face bowl. We used to take a bath in cold water.

RT: So you didn't have any hot water?

D: No, we didn't have no hot water. I used to be scared to take a bath. I don't like cold water. And the back window by our bedroom - it used to be cold back there.

RT: The window was broken?

D: Umm-hmm. They come out and fixed the window, but they didn't fix the furnace.

RT: Did you have heat?

D: Umm-hmm. We had heat. But we didn't have no hot water.

RT: Have you lived in a lot of different houses?

D: We stayed on Allenbank, Briar Grove, Walton. That's cause my grandma's house caught on fire... My cousin's got out... My other cousin had jumped out the window ...and this man next door named Butch kicked the door in and he got all of them out. The only person on the news was my cousin named Tiny. Because the newspeople had come and she was on the news.

RT: If you had one wish what would you wish for?

D: I wish I was staying with Michael Jackson... When we were staying on Palm and we used to stay by ourself and these white ladies used to come out there and this white lady came up there and opened the door and we got in trouble cause... They took us to a foster home and we stayed in there for a long time. We got out. My mama had to go to court.

RT: Did you all stay together?

D: Just me and my sister got to stay together. My brother had to stay with this other lady... I don't like babysitters... We stayed with my auntie on Cabanne and my mama had left me in the house with this boy named Keri - he 17 years old. And guess what he be doing with a whole bunch of kids? He be hittin' 'em with belts top of their head real hard and then my mama come back and we tell my mama he be hittin' us. One time he popped me upside my head and he tried to burn me with a skillet. He put the skillet on the stove (and) tried to burn me with it. I got a burn on my leg. I had to go to the doctor. He hit me over the head with a belt real hard.

RT: Why did he do that?

D: Because...umm...he called my mama a B-I-T-C-H. And that's why none of us like him.

RT: What do you think you'd like to be when you grow up?

D: A teacher. It's fun to be a teacher. You could learn more. You could graduate, get out of night school. And then you could get you a job, and you could do anything you'd want to do. You could... teach class, be like a grown-up. I don't wanna be no police.

RT: Why not?

D: Police get killed too much. They was supposed to catch this man that chop that girl's head off and they caught the man, but they ain't found the head. That was over by my cousin house. The girl, she used to stay right over there by my cousin house. The man had raped her.

RT: Your cousin knew that girl?

D: Umm-hmm. There's a girl missing over there? I don't know her name and they killed this boy and raped this boy. They killed this other boy. They killed a six year old girl, a eight year old boy, they killed a whole bunch of people...

At first, when I was going to Cote Brilliant school, all this stuff wasn't happening. But I understand now. I understand a lot because people used to get raped at Cote Brilliant school. That's why I don't go to that school.

I don't understand because at first when I be moving on that street, there wasn't nothing happenin'. But at night time people always get raped and stuff.



Super Man

Dione Age II

...AND A MOTHER

Interview with Danitha (20 years old, married mother of three year old, two year old, and five month old) by Janet Gray-McKennis and Tim Pekarek.

RT: What thoughts do you have about parenting, about being a mother?

D: Sometimes it's a hard decision just to become a mother. With a first child it [motherhood] was unexpected. It was scary, but then you find out you have some help from the other parent. It was hard towards the last months [of pregnancy], then it gets exciting, when they come.

With Sanita, my two year old, it was kinda hard, with surgery behind it. (I had a Caesarean with her). I was scared; I didn't know what to do. The doctor explained why I had to have the surgery. Both of us almost died. When she was born, she weighed about two pounds. They transferred her to another hospital. I came home before she did; she had to gain three more pounds. Then I had to feed her from a little tube, like a bottle. I was scared to hold her when I went to visit her - she was so small. My husband wasn't scared. When I brought her home, it was a Sunday, with everyone around. They didn't think she would be like this.

RT: No one thought she would live?

D: No, but she's two years old now. She catches cold fast, catches everything fast. You gotta be careful.

RT: Do you find that you make her a favorite?

D: Yes. I try not to show it. There's a lot of things you have to do to watch out for with such a small child.

RT: What scares you about being a mother?

D: As they get older, things happen to 'em. They can get into trouble when they get older.

RT: The world opens up to them

D: Uh-huh. I take 'em to the park, to the zoo, play with them, bathe 'em, read to 'em, and put 'em to bed. They still grow. I cuddle them.

Some parents hit their kids too fast. I tell mines to sit down. If they real bad, I spank 'em. Sometimes they drive you to a headache.

RT: What do you think of parenting?

[At this point the interview was interrupted; Danitha's five month old baby had awakened. She returned with him, and the rest of the interview was conducted with him on her lap].

D: I'm glad I started early with a family except they're too close in age. It's hard to get on the bus, going to the clinic.

RT: What do they give you.

D: They give me things to do. When I didn't have them, I didn't have to be responsible even for myself. They give me too much to do.

RT: Do you feel that your husband supports you in parenting?

D: A whole lot. Watching the kids, taking care of them for me. He's been taking care of his brothers and sisters since he was eleven, so it's not new or really hard for him. He's excited with the kids, too.

Sometimes I wish I could get away for awhile, and come back refreshed and do the things I want to do for myself.

RT: You could use a vacation.

D: Yeah! My husband is in the air force; he travels a lot, but he's working, too. He comes to see his kids a lot.

It's hard, and then sometimes it's easy. It's easy when they real small and they sleep [all the time].

RT: It gets harder as they get older?

D: Yes. My kids mind real easy, but they see other kids getting away with stuff and tag along. They gonna pick up things, but you gotta teach 'em not to pick up everything they see.

RT: Did you have much help from your mother when you became a mother?

D: I got married when I was 17, so I didn't really need my mother to help me out.

RT: Did you find that you picked up mothering as you went along?

D: Yeah, when I first became a mother it seemed like I knew what to do. But then, finding out you're gonna have another one, and trying to explain that to the first!

So I been married three and a half years.

Sometimes you be walking down the street, and people thinking you so young, ask you, "Can I help you?" (like getting on the bus), and I say, "No, I got this far - I can make it."





Mary Dutcher

After a year of living in Nicaragua, I find that the most basic of my first impressions have only deepened. My understanding has perhaps been nuanced somewhat, but the fundamental aspects of life in Nicaragua that originally struck me have been reinforced.

Probably the most vivid impression that continues to grow stronger with time is my amazement at the love and warm welcome that the Nicaraguans offer without exception to North Americans in their country. I am amazed because I remember how Iranian students in the U.S. had to hide in fear for their physical safety during the hostage crisis in 1979. Here, Nicaraguans repeatedly say and demonstrate that there is a difference between the people of the U.S. and the U.S. government. They place incredible faith and hope in the United States people. They believe that once the U.S. people understand the horrors that are being carried out here in their name, U.S. policy will quickly change.

Also striking is the universal love of children present in this culture. It remains especially moving to me to see the gentleness and affection with which Nicaraguan men relate to children. Abortion is illegal here, and people are genuinely confused when I try to explain why women in the U.S. might want to have an abortion. In this society, children are welcome and seen as an absolute gift. Nicaraguans often refer to making a better future for the children when they talk about the source of their strength to continue struggling in the face of the terrorism, death, food shortages, etc.

An appreciation that has grown deeper and perhaps falls into the category of a "nuance" in my understanding relates to my perception of the Nicaraguan government. It is certainly true that uniformed persons and weapons are an ever-present

OUR EYES IN

reality of life in Nicaragua, and accidental deaths related to military life - accidents with weapons or military vehicles - are all too frequent. But it is also true that the contras have a pattern of attacking unarmed communities and not attacking those that are armed. Even more striking to me in the midst of this reality is the basic commitment to nonviolence and the use of nonviolent techniques - dialogue, openness to change and criticism, flexibility - that the Nicaraguan government has demonstrated both within and outside of the country.

So it is even more obvious to me that Nicaragua could never hope to match the United States in terms of military power. But the power that Nicaragua possesses is the moral force of truth and the basic justice of its position vis-a-vis the United States. And this source of power, as we know and believe, borders on the infinite.

My feelings toward the United States are probably the arena in which there has been the most roller-coasterlike movement. Those feelings have ranged from deep anger and almost despair - identifying with Christ's words about weeping over Jerusalem because it did "not know those things that make for peace" and the resultant imminent destruction it faced - to a growing and deepening love for the people in the United States who struggle in the midst of the spiritual wilderness to uphold a vision of our country faithful to justice, democracy, and peace.

I have learned from the Nicaraguan people that it is possible to find peace and even joy in the midst of a situation of aggression, injustice, death, poverty, and great suffering. I have learned from the wave after wave of wonderful U.S. citizens who have come on Witness for Peace short-term teams that it is not correct to despair over the present reality in the United States. As Miguel D'Escoto said to us not long ago, we cannot hope to do any really valuable work if it does not come out of a deep love for our country.



NICARAGUA

Managua has much the feel of our own north St. Louis neighborhood. There are lots of vacant lots due to the earthquake and shells of buildings damaged in the war. It is easy to feel at home here. We do eat beans and rice three times a day, though in Managua there are also fruit and vegetables. Our first day here we attended the inauguration of Ortega and Ramirez as President and Vice-President. It was a pleasant event. I was struck by the number of foreigners there - North Americans and Europeans, not Cubans and Soviets - by the presence of Fidel Castro, and by the real enthusiasm with which Ortega was received. Interestingly, he was greeted with a chorus of "power to the people." In the U.S., to greet Reagan thus would be a protest; here it is an expression of a common accomplishment.

The Kansas Witness for Peace delegation that I was with had to decide if we wanted to make our scheduled visit to San Juan de Limay, in the north. Just the day before our arrival in Nicaragua the contra had killed 14 and kidnapped 8 on one of the roads entering the town. Maryknoll Sister Nancy Donovan was detained by the contra on the same day. We hear she made the news in the States. We pretty easily decided that as a bus full of North Americans we were relatively safe and that what we had come for was to be with the people of Nicaragua in their bearing the consequences of U.S. policy.

The ride up was uneventful. We were quite warmly received when we arrived on Friday night. Both the people of the town and the government have been most generous in spending time with us. As people here say, "We have had 34 killed here in a month. Unarmed civilians and workers massacred by the contra. We have been patient. But we cannot endure any more." So the regular army arrived on Saturday night and you



Virginia Druhe

could almost hear the sigh of relief. Sunday morning during Mass they began to pull out to take up their positions in the surrounding hills. I watched the apprehension on the people's faces. Many local men went as well. And as truck after truck of troops went by the window the gringo priest of our group said the words of consecration, "this is my body...this is my blood, given for you." As we prayed the Our Father and began the Communion, the first truck of food arrived at the back door of the church under armed guard.



It was not the most emotional moment of my time here, but the juxtaposition made for the most profound insight I've had into the struggle of this people. I've not become a lover of armies. There has been combat out in the hills this week. At least ten contra and one government soldier have been killed.

MARY DUTCHER & VIRGINIA DRUHE, long-time members of the St. Louis Catholic Worker, are both part of the permanent team of the Witness For Peace. Not at all surprising to us, we are told by the national WFP office that they are loved deeply. Please join us in praying for their safety, and for peace in Central America.

I don't know anyone who feels joy in that. There is relief that the contra are on the run, that supplies can get in, though we still have no vegetables or dairy products because a nearby cooperative that provided these things was ambushed on the 27th of December and all the people have fled. We saw the cows and chickens there, wandering homeless. We have water only a few hours a day because they haven't been able to bring in oil for the town water pump and it is overheating. So I think I have a taste of what the contra mean to Nicaraguans.

The other side of the coin is how such circumstances reveal to us our communion. Supplies are shared freely. I hear no complaints. We gringos are welcomed to the funeral of a young man brutally tortured by the contra. People love to explain their revolution to us. You can see the pride and joy as they explain: "All this land used to belong to one man. He left at the triumph. Now there are 15 of us here. We love each other like brothers and sisters. We are all equal. We can support ourselves from our own work."

Or another man: "My parents were peasants who could barely sign their own name. We are 12 brothers and sisters and we all

work for the revolution. We all work so our people will have better lives." With such joy they show the new homes they are building, the new schools. They love their revolution. To them it means they are equals, working together for the betterment of all. There is a consistent tendency to take care of the poorest first. A real satisfaction is gained in knowing that though we have very little, everyone has their share.

I know very little of what happens in Managua, but I think I've seen what the revolution means to people here. They have shown they are willing to defend it with their lives. I trust they will. I am even certain they would defend it against Managua if they thought there were any need. They have found something to live for and will not turn back. The tragedy for me is that these people find themselves in a situation where there seems to be no choice but to kill. What a hard spot we have put them in. The only non-violent solution I see now is for the people of the U.S. to change U.S. policy. And to do all we can to let the voice of Nicaragua be heard there. We must be the voice of Nicaragua in the U.S. We can't count on anyone else to do it.



"Prayer and sacrifice must be used as the most effective spiritual weapons in the war against war, and like all weapons, they must be used with deliberate aim: not just with a vague aspiration for peace and security, but against violence and war."

—Thomas Merton

BOOK REVIEW



by Patrick G. Coy

BREAKING BREAD: The Catholic Worker and the Origins of Catholic Radicalism in America, by Mel Piehl. Temple University Press, 1982, \$19.95, 296 pp. (paperback version by Temple due out later this year @ \$9.95).

In the final chapter of this ground breaking work, Mel Piehl puts his finger on the heart of the problem facing any historian who endeavors to write an analytical history of the Catholic Worker Movement. Piehl rightly understands that "Drawing historical conclusions about the Catholic Worker is difficult because the movement itself does not fit easily into conventional categories. It was at once a social and political movement, a utopian experiment, and a force for change in American Catholicism. What made the group of (even) greater interest was its function as a movement of intellectual and spiritual renewal."

While admitting the difficulties involved in analyzing the anarchistic Worker, Piehl does not let this deter him from a scholarly laying bare of Worker history, and an insightful standing of it in relation to the U.S. radical community, the U.S. Catholic community, and the still larger U.S. culture.

He wastes no time getting to the core of his analysis when in the second chapter, entitled "Religion and Social Thought: The American Context," he states that "The Catholic Worker is historically significant as the first major expression of radical social criticism in American Catholicism." This feather in the hat of the Catholic Worker is not to be lightly regarded; Piehl shows that the early U.S. Catholic Church was a very rocky and unlikely ground for radicalism to flourish in. It was an immigrant church - one held suspect by the larger Protestant culture. It was, therefore, a church which prized respectability and orthodoxy, all with a view to acceptance and integration.

Part of the genius of Dorothy Day was that she knew that, at heart, her radical values were thoroughly American; and that she must eventually discover a way to put them into praxis within her new-found church. Values such as personal liberty, greater social and economic equality, hostility to political coercion, a closing of the gap between public and private morality - these and others Piehl shows to be consonant with the American spirit. And this Assistant Professor of Humanities at Valparaiso University does it by presenting an erudite yet highly readable sketch of the turbulent U.S. scene between 1870 and 1930.

The Catholic Worker is significant
as the first major expression
of radical social criticism
in U.S. Catholicism.

The real strength of Piehl's scholarship is revealed in this same chapter. If one could expect him to rely heavily on secondary sources anywhere in this work, it would be here, where he is about the business of painting the larger cultural picture into which the Worker must be placed. But to his credit he doesn't, choosing instead to draw directly on the works of Shailer Mathews, James Cardinal Gibbons, Washington Gladden, George Herrou, and others. An added bonus in

PATRICK COY, Karen House community member and campus minister at St. Louis University, is looking forward to the spring warbler migration.

this chapter are the similarities and distinctions drawn between Catholic social thought, the Catholic Worker, and the Protestant-based Social Gospel movement. The distinctions are shown to have resulted from the differing *sitz im leben* of the movements, while their similarities often arose simply from their shared goal of making U.S. society a closer approximation of the beloved community. Piehl is the first historian to stand the Catholic Worker in relation to the Social Gospel movement in any substantive way, and while there remains much to be done here, he deserves recognition for blazing an important trail.



It is not insignificant that the Catholic Worker grew up in the social milieu of the Depression. Piehl names the Worker as "the means whereby the unsettling perspectives of the radical Gospel first found their way into American Catholicism." That the Catholic Worker was able to be that vehicle, and to grow as quickly as it *did*, is attributed to it being originally understood as part of the larger "American Catholic consensus" regarding the Depression. After all, didn't the Catholic Worker, along with the wider Catholic community, offer support for labor, for large parts of the New Deal, and for the Bishops' social statements? But as the Catholic consensus broke up in 1935/36 over the Child Labor Amendment, as the effects of the Depression lessened and the full implications of the Catholic Worker Movement's commitment to radical Gospel values became clearer, as the Worker began to ring the pacifist bell

more loudly in response to the European militarism of the late '30's, and as a new and more virulent strain of anti-communism began to sweep over the U.S. landscape like a highly contagious disease, the Catholic Worker suddenly found itself rather alone on the U.S. Catholic scene.

That this was bound to happen is underscored by Piehl's consummate scholarship in examining the historical development of the Catholic Worker vis-a-vis these and other internal and external pressure points - pressures which affected and shaped the movement. In his analysis of these pressure points, Piehl identifies one underlying theme in Worker history.

Whether the historical issue at hand was the proven impracticality of the farming communes, the Worker's eventual disaffection for the big labor unions, the holding on to pacifism during World War II, or how to respond to the Campionite challenge regarding the hospitality ministry, Piehl maintains that "the governing consideration was always which path would best testify to their religiously grounded radical Gospel ideas." Writing as I do from inside the Worker, I can only say that, at best, I hope we have tried to make this lofty ideal our governing consideration. That we have often failed and will surely continue to do so should go without saying.

In the fifth chapter, entitled "The Catholic Worker and Catholic Liberalism", the thesis is developed that while the Catholic Worker itself has not had a great impact as a social or political movement, it has nevertheless had tremendous indirect impact via the route of tradition Catholic integralism - by influencing specific individuals and movements. In support of this point, Piehl identifies seven different examples of Catholic Worker-inspired liberalism - from the original Christian Front, to the Association of Catholic Trade Unions, to John Cogley and Commonweal, to Michael Harrington and "The War on Poverty". In this context, Piehl makes what can only be viewed as a rather startling claim. In his examination of the mutual influence The Catholic Worker and Commonweal exerted on each other, those opinions of Commonweal that went beyond the conventional liberalism of the 1950's are attributed to the "continuing influence of the Catholic Worker on Cogley and his colleagues."

In the very timely sixth chapter, "The Catholic Worker and Peace," the influence the Catholic Worker has had on U.S. movements for peace is clarified. While clearly

hailing the Worker's pacifist emphasis as an important forerunner to the peace witness of the "Catholic Left" in the 1960's and '70's, Piehl puts forth the interesting proposition that the real significance of the pacifist stance was that it underscored the radical nature of the Catholic Worker itself. Before 1940, the perceived emphasis of the Catholic Worker was on hospitality, on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy lived out on behalf of the poor and rooted in the traditional theology of the Mystical Body of Christ. These were "ideals" many could subscribe to, or at the very least, empathize with. Few they were, however, who recognized the true depth and breadth of Day's vision of radical Gospel values. And for most, it is clear that pacifism continues, as it did then, to fall outside the pale.

Dorothy Day



The Monks' Journal

In my opinion, the contributions the Catholic Worker made to the larger U.S. peace movement are analogous to the more general contributions it continues to make to the U.S. Catholic community. The Worker called the burgeoning peace movement of the early 1960's to intellectual depth and clarity, especially in regards to the important means/ends debate on nuclear deterrence. The traditional Worker emphasis on taking personal responsibility for social ills resulted in the Catholic Worker providing the peace movement with many of the

individuals willing to go to jail to further the cause of peace. Society was thereby offered a prophetic witness in the face of both Cold War hysteria and the U.S. war in Southeast Asia. Of equal importance was the call for the peace movement to integrate spirituality and activism, an integration that was long a hallmark of the Catholic Worker itself.

These are the same gifts which the Catholic Worker gives to the church. Piehl calls the Worker largely a "movement of intellectual and spiritual renewal." In this he is right. He uncovers the truly important role The Catholic Worker paper itself has played in shaping U.S. Catholic spiritual and intellectual life in the twentieth century. And in defining a spiritual movement as "one that positively addresses the spiritual dilemmas of a period and thereby opens the possibility of new cultural approaches to religion", Piehl uncovers the Catholic Worker movement - layer by layer - and reveals it to be a spiritual movement worthy of his definition.

This analytical history is so well-researched that the notes often read like a veritable "Who's Who" in U.S. Catholicism! It is invitational in tone, appealing to historians, activists, students and scholars. It offers a skillful blend of scholarly analysis with engaging narrative, and - in that sense - the author has himself mastered a trait which has been a trademark of the movement he has studied so perceptively.

One does, however, often yearn for more narrative, more stories from Worker history to flesh out the analysis. But perhaps that desire is not as well-founded as it might be. Readers of The Round Table know that Catholic Worker history provides good story, for as Stanley Vishniewski was fond of saying, "The Catholic Worker consists of martyrs and saints, and the martyrs are those who have to live with the saints." It is not still another retelling of stories about these martyrs and saints that the Church needs, but an analysis that offers fresh and challenging insights into the ongoing significance of Catholic radicalism for the wider church. Mel Piehl has gone far in providing that analysis.

(A slightly different version of this review originally appeared in the Journal of Religion and Intellectual Life).



FROM LITTLE HOUSE

by Mary Ann McGivern, S.L.



I hate statistics. That's why I usually don't remember them. As much as I've lived with the military spending data, when I laid out the rough draft for the statistical charts elsewhere in the journal, I couldn't remember if it was 2 or 5 billion (it was 5!) It is too much money, too many people, too much human suffering. On the phone, collecting data, I wanted to chat with people, ask them what they thought of the figures they were reading off to me.

Doesn't the press compare lead poisoning with the measles outbreak, I asked. What about follow-up? What long-term impairment do the 1215 suffer who were diagnosed in 1971? How many cures are there? What constitutes a cure? How many of the 5700 children born to teenagers in 1981 died before their first birthday? Why doesn't the city keep that record?

Doesn't \$4.6 million a month seem a very low payment to 19,000 families with dependent children? And doesn't \$308 a month for a family of four compute to \$3,686 a year? How many get the maximum \$261 in food stamps? Who lives in subsidized housing and how much is the subsidy? Does anyone on AFDC get enough money to buy the kids shoes when they need them?

Listing the questions like that sounds adversarial - and I want to be adversarial with somebody, make an argument on behalf of all the persons behind the numbers - but the men and women I talked with were both helpful and grateful that at least someone was asking them about the crooked structures they record.

Trying to put a human face on my data, I thought about the children I've known at the Worker.

Children having children: Jean, daughter of Ruth, giving birth at age 14. Sharon, daughter of Helen, giving birth at age 15. Their children are 5 and 7 now. 17 year old Lisa, 16 year old Ann Therese, 17 year old Barbara whose son Robbie then was poisoned by lead paint. B.L.'s twins died at 7 months. Debbie's 5 year old son and infant daughter both dead. Working on this issue of The Round Table reminds me of my grief for so many families.

My most abiding sorrow is tied to my experience of joy with the children who clung to me. Four year old Turtle cried one day when I was off to work at the Peace Institute. I said, "I have to go to work to bring home the bacon." And he said, "We don't have to eat bacon." Turtle's 10 and lives near St. Luke's Hospital; I'm scared to visit him because I can't be a steady presence in his life - or in Jose's or Hope's or Tammy's or any of the hundred children I've known well for a short time, children starved for affection, attention, play, time off from the grind of getting by on almost nothing.

What will become of them? They can't read. Some are sick. Some lisp. None of them know anything outside the walls of poverty.

We only know the end of a few stories. Charles Otis will be a sophomore in September and has interviews lined up for jobs at the zoo, stadium, and Brightside. Elijha and Kent will be juniors, Carmen a sophomore, and Paul, who will be 19 before you receive this in the mail, had a son, Joseph, born March 16. Antrice, Barbara, Vicki, Tel and others work regularly at the Worker houses. Lulu is married, has a second child, and works for Blue Cross.

It reminds me of the "babies in the river" story. Someone spotted babies in the river. Teams worked shifts around the clock to rescue them, cure their hypothermia, feed them, find foster care and adoptive parents. Then somebody on one of the shifts just walked away and began heading upstream. Everybody cried, "Come back. We need you. Help us save the babies." And the person answered, "I'm going upstream to see who's throwing the babies into the river."

The Little House is fine. Sister Caram and Elijha spend weekends with us. B.J.'s mother Miriam and my brother Joe are ill. Please pray for them. Frances has moved to Council Towers. Steve is rewiring her apartment, says the 30 amp service is the most primitive he's seen. Ellen and Myrrah will move in as soon as we've tested for lead paint.

MARY ANN MCGIVERN, S.L., continues to patiently transform the vacant lot next to the Little House into a green oasis. Asparagus has now joined her roses.

A STATISTICAL TABLE OF SOCIAL SIN

COMPILED BY MARY ANN McGIVERN, S.L.

NATIONAL DATA, 1984

Average income: \$24,850/yr
 Poverty line: 10,178/yr
 Average cost of food
 for a family of 4: 95.40/wk

MISSOURI

Maximum food stamp allotment for a family of 4 (if their rent is high, etc.): \$261/mo.

METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA (5 Illinois and 4 Missouri counties plus St. Louis city)

1984 HUD estimate of homeless any night: 3000
 Individuals who received emergency shelter in 1984: 10,000

ST. LOUIS CITY

Current housing wait list for families:
 --public housing: 11,464
 --section 8: 8,996

Lead paint poisoning 1971-83
 --children screened: 131,376
 --testing positive: 24,195

1984
 --children screened: 12,982
 --testing positive: 1,066

Infant mortality, 1983

--white: 8.7 deaths per 1000 live births
 --non-white: 20.7 deaths per 1000 live births
 --total: 15.8 deaths per 1000 live births

Proposed federal school lunch cut:
 \$686 million (29.2% in St. Louis Metro Area)

Estimate of students that will be omitted from the school lunch program: 7.3 million
 Number of people in the St. Louis City receiving food stamps: 87,692
 Monthly cost of the city food stamp program: \$4,483,497

HOW MUCH IS A MILLION DOLLARS? \$? \$?



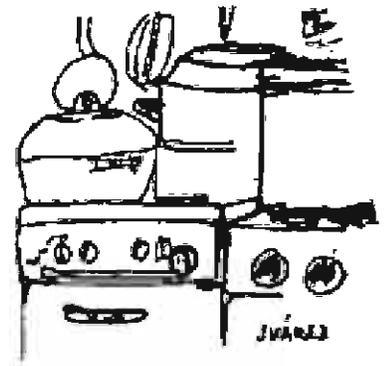
1 F-18 fighter plane, made in St. Louis, costs \$32 million.
 1 year operating budget for Cardinal Glennon Hospital - \$32 million
 1 year operating budget for the Botanical Gardens - \$5 million
 Total cost of Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project in the 1990s when the bond issue is paid - \$116 million
 FY 1983 Department of Defense contract awards in the Metropolitan Statistical Area: \$5,325,961,000 (yes, that is billions)

Source: Catholic Relief Services

FROM



K
A
R
E
N



by Clare Bussjaeger

HOUSE

Judging from the questions we get asked by new visitors, people must wonder a lot about the food situation at Karen House: "Do you get enough food? . . . Would it help if I bring hams for Easter? . . . Do the children get enough milk? . . . Could you use some tomatoes from my sister's garden? . . . How many people do you feed? . . . Do you have a soup line? . . . Who does the cooking?"

Well, with the soup line for neighbors over at Cass House, our task is fairly small, centering around three meals a day for about thirty people - say twenty-five of our guests and five community members. Usually, there are about eight children here, but if any of them are school age they are unlikely to be here at lunch time. However, their absence is usually made up for by a former guest who has dropped in for a visit.

Too, we make sandwiches (peanut butter and jelly, or perhaps cheese) for people who ask at the door. Mostly, people who stop by for a sandwich are men who live nearby - the same men who gather about the east wall of the vacant building across the way on Benton Street in the mornings - or the men who hang out on Fourteenth Street on the glass-strewn lot near the abandoned shoestore.

Even though by our agreed-upon division of labor with Cass house food boxes are obtained there, we still give food to neighbors for preparation at their home in emergency, particularly if the person

or family used to stay at Karen House. I mean, really, I'd be embarrassed to tell somebody who lived with us for three or four months to hightail it on down the street when we have a bag of yams, a gallon of soup, some lettuce and a few apples to spare. We give away food to neighbors this way about a dozen times a week.

The food that is shared with us by parishes, prayer groups, families, Eckert's Cafeteria, Alexian Brothers' Hospital, and one of the "food banks" is consumed right here on our six dining room tables. Breakfasts are minimally nutritious and maximally sweet, too often. We have doughnuts or other pastry or cake almost every morning. Usually, a house brand of corn-flakes is available, but sometimes I get too cheap doing the grocery shopping and fail to buy enough milk. Already as an effort to ration the milk we serve it only at breakfast. While the eggs given us by the Carter and McCaskill families are reserved for cooking and Sundays, fruit is readily available not only at breakfast but at all three meals, thanks to Bob Kova et al who salvage the throw-away produce from a Florissant supermarket. Then there's coffee: normally we make one 40-cup urn a day. But occasionally we've had one or two heavy coffee-gulpers, necessitating an extra half-urn.

We serve lunch for our guests at 12:30, just as they are returning from their morning's job and apartment-hunting. Seems

CLARE BUSSJAEGER, Karen House Community member, went back to school earlier this spring. She is busy with Joe Angert making their wedding plans for summer.

as if soup is a noonmeal mainstay. We get a good bit of already-made soup donated 'most every week. The morning housekeeper has a fairly easy job to just heat it up, along with bread and leftovers from the night before.

This food was likely to have been leftovers to begin with. The biggest reliable source for our supper meals is Alexian Brothers Hospital. The kitchen workers there save all kinds of vegetables and main dishes that they were unable to use in the cafeteria. So by the time it finds our plates, it's been cooked, held on a steam table, refrigerated, transferred to

for thirty take a good bit of preparation time, so Lee has them ready for the stove by the time the night's cook arrives on the scene. Besides, we have the hospital vegetables to use, too. What is needed is someone skilled in mushy vegetable resuscitation, able to turn hodgepodge accumulations of chipped beef, meatballs with tomato sauce, and chicken pieces into a single palatable casserole or stew. No task for the epicurean gourmet, this is a nitty-gritty job for the artsy-craftsy sort with an appreciation for recycling.

Things do come together so that, all-in-all, we're able to offer decent meals



Andy Cheneff

Karen House's containers, re-refrigerated, then re-heated for supper. Some foods are still tasty enough after all that handling. Others change in texture rather dramatically. Think, for example, of asparagus, english peas, or lasagna.

Who cooks/reassembles the meals? Lee always knows what food is on hand and is talented at planning meals, so she makes out all the menus. Actually, she does a heck of a lot of the cooking, too. Three times a week people of our support community - willing and able friends of the house - prepare the supper meal. I'm afraid there's not much glamour in this task. Mostly, there aren't even potatoes to peel or cabbage to chop unless the cook can get here very early. Fresh vegetable:

to our guests. Perhaps I've only grown accustomed, but it seems to me that things are better at Karen House, foodwise, than they were five years ago: more and fresher fruit and vegetables, no more last-minute scrambles to find more food when the serving pots empty before everyone is served, generous people who come regularly with meals to serve, fewer heavy meals of carbohydrate upon carbohydrate. Now if only I could ensure vegetarian pizza a week!



FROM CASS HOUSE



by Tommy Askew

I would like to take this time to say hello to all. I'm going into my second year at Cass House and would like to share my gratitude with you, and especially with Cass House. I'm very proud to be a member of the community. The friendship that has been bestowed on me I'll never forget. I came to Cass House in November 1983 and found something that had become very rare - friends. I'm one who values that, and I love being a friend to others. I've learned a lot from all of you and will continue to do so. I'm also a member of the Community Land Trust of St. Louis. I'm very excited about that, too.

Our community at Cass House has grown with Tim coming from Joplin, Missouri. He has been a big plus to us. He works very hard and doesn't get much rest, so I'll say, "Tim, get some rest!" (Smile). It is easy to burn yourself out, and we don't want that. Stanley has been ill recently. (As we go to press, Stanley has suffered a stroke and is in intensive care at Barnes Hospital. Please keep him in your prayers. --ed.) Bobbie Ross gave birth to a beautiful baby girl on Saturday, February 2nd. Janet and Sr. Carol were on hand. Bobbie has named her Monica Carol Ross after Sr. Monica Schreiber and Sr. Carol Donahue. Little Monica's younger siblings are still calling their sister "Sister Monica Sister Carol." Tragically, Zack's Grandfather died the night of March 21st. Please keep his family in your prayers. Zack is a wonder to me. He never tires of doing something constructive - I'm amazed at his energy. Zack please slow down??

A new member to Cass House, Mary Fitzgerald, has also been a plus. She is a live-in volunteer whom everyone finds very comfortable to be around. She has a special warmth about her that's irresistible. I say welcome and hope you're around for some time.

Those of the community living outside of Cass House are greatly missed: Kathy, Joy, Sr. Carol and Barb. It is always great to see them. While they were here I would take for granted that I would see them the next day. I say that, along with other things, let's not take each other for granted. Let us always pray for Virginia and the people

of Nicaragua. May peace be restored and send Virginia back to us. Amen.

Our work is helping the homeless and the poor. I would like to take this time to say a prayer entitled "Happy are the poor in spirit."

Some may ask how blest are the poor in spirit, the reign of God is theirs. Blest too are the sorrowing, for they shall be comforted.

Blest are they who hunger and thirst, for they shall have their fill.

Blest the peacemakers.

Blest are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you. Be glad and rejoice for your reward in heaven is great.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. Amen.

I'm not good at writing, but for those who thought I could I say thanks. My writing is short - for me to write everything I want is impossible. Words don't come easily to thank people for being so kind and thoughtful. It brings tears to my eyes. I love each and every one in the community, and hope our relationship will continue as it is. "Love you all." (Smile.)



TOMMY ASKEW, Community member at Cass House, provides a steady and compassionate presence on the men's side at Cass House.

Round Table Talk

by Patrick G. Coy

What follows is the inaugural column of a new feature in the pages of The Round Table. "Round Table Talk" will regularly appear here on the second last page, and will be an occasion of Catholic Worker social commentary. More often than not, our house articles concentrate on the daily happenings in our hospitality houses and on the comings and goings of our community members and guests. We think house news to be important as we want you, our readers, to know us and to feel at home when you visit us. But we think it of equal import to dialogue with you on the pressing social issues of our day. Since the approach of this journal is thematic, with each issue largely devoted to a single topic, we are seldom able to find space where a community member can sound off and publicly scratch the social itch that has been bothering them.

We hope to bring the fifty-two year old Catholic Worker tradition to bear on a wide range of social issues. The analytical tools at our disposal in this venture have their origins in our attempt to be true to the teachings of Christ. We are pacifists who believe that Jesus meant what he said when he preached the Sermon on the Mount. Our houses of hospitality and the multifaceted work we do on behalf of our guests is our surely inadequate attempt to live out the ethical demands of Jesus' hillside homily. That we fail daily is taken for granted. That we at least try daily is crucial.

Our editorial board believes that that attempt, however flawed and inadequate, is significant enough to offer us a peculiar perspective on reality. This is especially so since it is informed and enlivened by the Worker tradition. The political power-brokers in this world would, I am sure, deem our perspective more than peculiar. So be it. We are, after all, the sometimes all-too-proud possessors of a history bespeckled with attempts to bear witness to gospel truth in the face of state power. Living amongst the poor and disenfranchised in the shadow of the Gateway Arch does strange things to how one views reality. This should not be surprising since Jesus hung around with prostitutes, Samaritans, sinners, adulterers, women and foreigners,

and look what crazy ideas he ended up propagating!

Why is all of this so important? I think it fair to assume that no one in the upper levels of the Reagan administration can lay claim to having a poor person as a friend. It's as simple as all that. They have no financially impoverished soul mate to break Eucharistic bread with by breaking open their lives together through the simple sharing of life stories. If I were wrong in my assumption, the person chosen to defend the legal and constitutional rights of the poor of our nation, Attorney General Edwin Meese, would not be able to say that people eat, by preference, the salvaged food we serve at our soupline, and sleep on the cold ceramic tile of our porch by choice. If Ronald Reagan really knew, as a friend, farmers who have seen their life's work and family heritage vanish in an hour - gone forever in the putrid smoke of foreclosure - he would not make remarks like, "I think we should keep the grain and export the farmers."

These are crass remarks which, tragically, reflect equally insensitive foreign and domestic policy. The militarization of our economy is resulting in the corporatization of our agriculture. The human face is absent. Compassion is replaced by crassness.

Perhaps Dorothy had these same dynamics in mind when she wrote in the May, 1940 issue of The Catholic Worker that "Patience, contentment with the little way, hard work, obscurity and poverty, the knowledge of the poor which results in the love of the poor, these are what is needed."

So, we will write out of our experience, hoping to bring about the clarification of thought that was so central to Peter Maurin's vision. And we hope you will respond. Considerable time and energy is expended on this journal which now goes out to nearly 2000 of you. We still type it on a typewriter prone to breakdowns; layout is done amongst the clutter and chaos of the community room at Karen House. We often wonder about the results of our writing and your reading. Do you agree, disagree, care? We would like to give a little space to letters to the editors from our readers, so don't be bashful, go ahead and scratch your itch in these pages as well! +

Community Prayer:

AT KAREN HOUSE:
Tuesday at 9:00 p.m.

AT CASS HOUSE:
Wednesday at 7:15 p.m.

Come pray with us.

CW Course

Patrick Coy, community member at Karen House and campus minister at St. Louis University, will teach a course at SLU in July on "U.S. Catholic Spiritualities: Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton". For more info: St. Louis U. Dept. of Theological Studies at 658-2881.

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Although subscriptions are free, donations are gladly accepted. Please write to Mark Scheu, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO, 63106. People working on this issue were: June Brown, Patrick Coy, Michael McIntyre, Janet Grey McKennis, Tim Petarek, Ellen Rehg, and Mark Scheu.

You Are Invited To Our Birthday Party!!

The Catholic Worker is 52 years old on May 1st. We will celebrate this occasion with a liturgy, followed by a dessert pot-luck. Please join us and help us celebrate our birthday, by sharing prayer and breaking bread with us at Cass House on Wednesday, May 1, at 7:15pm.

-SPEAKERS-

The Catholic Worker Movement is over 51 years old. We have a long and rich tradition of trying to witness to the values of pacifism, voluntary poverty, the corporal works of mercy and racial and social justice. We are eager to share our story with you, our readers. If you would like one of us to speak to your group, please call us at 621-4052 (Karen House) or 621-3085 (Cass House).

THE ROUND TABLE

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