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Wolf P. Wolfensberger
Syracuse University

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TIPS

Editor / Publisher

Wolf Wolfensberger
Professor
Division of Special Education
and Rehabilitation
805 South Crouse Avenue
Syracuse University
Syracuse, New York
13244-2280



Editorial Address:

Training Institute for Human Service
Planning, Leadership & Change Agency
805 South Crouse Avenue
Syracuse, New York 13244-2280
U. S. A.

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Syracuse, New York

We continue our tradition of devoting the December issue to the themes appropriate to the season: imprisonment and bondage, homelessness, news related to the Christmas season and to religion, to new life and infancy, and to peace and war. Thus, of all the TIPS issues in a year, the December one is the only one that always has the same combination of themes.

Imprisonment

Our prison news runneth over. Readers may recall that it was only in the April/June 1986 issue that we had to include a big section on prison news because it was accumulating too rapidly.

Prisons hate prisoners and seek to destroy them. It makes no difference whether prisoners are innocent or guilty, have committed a serious or a minor crime, or are repentant or not, are meek or mean.

A Wife Visits Her Husband in Prison

(Donna E. Desormeaux wrote this in Fall 83 Center Peace, a news journal of the Center of Law and Pacifism, here presented slightly abbreviated.)

Sunday, July 17, 1983

Each Sunday of every month, I visit my husband. I have been told by prison superintendents that visitation is the most important part in rehabilitation. If this is so, why are so many visitors discouraged. Prison destroys marriages, and discourages "love."

I fill out a paper with my name and other information required to visit my husband. I am required to have a pat search in order to enter the visiting room. I feel more like I am being sexually molested as the guard digs her hands into my brassiere and feels across my crotch. Is this necessary? I've been told it is to prevent drug-trafficking in contact visiting. Can you explain then why drugs flow freely in institutions where visitors have no contact with

inmates, but over phones? What's going on here? After this demeaning episode, I am allowed through a steel gate separating stairs to the visiting room.

My husband is searched and allowed through the steel gate to greet me. We embrace and kiss, then walk toward a table. We are excited for it's been a long week, and we are so happy to finally see one another. We settle down some and talk. We talk of our future plans, our house, our children and our love for each other. We lean across the table and kiss one another. We are immediately reprimanded and threatened with the loss of our contact visit and being placed on the phones. Why? What is wrong with a man and wife kissing one another? I am so angry inside at this inhumane treatment; yes, even bitter.

I smile at my husband as I lean back in my chair pretending it does not matter. I think to myself, "How can the guard be so cruel? Is it not enough I can only see him once a week?" I mask my anger to my husband, thinking about the week he has already had. He has been through a week I could not have survived in years.

His face becomes grim while he tells me of a few fellow cons who have died within these past few months he has been here. One had hung himself, another raped, and still another stabbed to death in the presence of a guard. As I listen, I think, "Which Sunday will it be, that I come here and it will be my husband injured? Or when will I receive that nightmare call telling me I no longer have a husband?" I try so very hard to block these thoughts from my mind, eradicating these feelings from my heart. I need the reassurance of his touch, the comfort of his embrace and the tenderness in his kiss. He needs the same from me.

Our eyes meet, like reading each other's hearts, our lips move together. From nowhere again, that harsh and cold voice that has warned us is saying we will be written up. We are humiliated and shamed because we exchanged a loving hug and kiss.

We refrain from affection, until the guard looks away. We are forced to sneak a quick hug and kiss. Most of our visit is spent talking about all the things we've done and what we plan to do upon his release. We laugh, smile and joke, then someone behind a desk rhythmically beats on a bell, shouting, "Time's up, visitors! Let's get going! I said, Let's move it!" We are herded out like cattle. I feel that he can see the strain I endure visiting him there. I smile gently and promise to see him next week. We kiss good-bye.

There is a young woman who can no longer tolerate prison cruelties. Tears fall from her bowed head as she confesses in almost a whisper, "I'll never come here again. I love him, but I can't take another week of this." I feel a sadness in my heart to know another marriage will dissolve as a result of strenuous and tension-filled visits. I silently thank God for the indestructible bond of love he has so graciously given to Dennis and me. I know our marriage will be one of the few to survive this insanity.

It is my opinion that more visiting days are necessary and more humane treatment should be afforded to the visitors. I believe we need better trained guards in the visiting rooms. If wives were treated with a little more dignity and less humiliation, marriages would stand a better chance of surviving.

Jailhouse Blues

*In the mid-1980s, military regimens for legal offenders made a comeback. In a number of states, programs were instituted, called "Regimented Inmate Discipline," which have been very much akin to military boot camp, sometimes even conducted by military drill instructors. Somewhat amusingly, the prisoners often have also been subjected to "psycho-correctional therapy," which includes lectures and discussions about criminal behavior (Time, 11/8/86).

*In MI prisons, relatives manage to smuggle in "penny-ante" amounts of drugs, but the bulk thereof is brought in by the staff themselves for sale to the prisoners, showing once again how much our prisons are out of control. It is also amazing to contemplate that families think that they are doing their members a favor by bringing them drugs (AP, in SHJ, 14/7/86).

*In 1986, officials of the West Virginia Penitentiary in Moundsville warned guards to minimize their contact with prisoners to the absolute minimum, and the warden expressed regret that "You can't do away with it completely" (Charleston Daily Mail, 19/3/86).

*We have mentioned Helen Woodson before who is in the Alderson Federal Prison. For defrauding the government of \$7.4 million in taxes, Italian fashion designer Gucci was sentenced in New York to a mere 1 year in prison and a \$30,000 fine. At the same time, people such as Helen Woodson have been sentenced to 18 years in prison for largely symbolic acts against nuclear armaments. On the first anniversary of her imprisonment, 6 of her children (most of them adopted) who were still at home (all 6 retarded) participated in a prayer service at the missile silo where their mother had given offense. One of them, aged 11, announced, "One year ago, Mommy kicked the bomb. Mom is in jail. Now we all kick the bomb." Also, when this child visited her in prison and was about to depart, he told the guard that he was coming back the next day to make sure Mommy didn't get lost. The guard assured him that there were many people in the prison whose sole occupation it was to make sure Mommy didn't get lost. The boy gave him a big hug and said "thank you" (AAMD Religion Division Newsletter, Summer 86). We also learn from Helen Woodson that the church missal used at her prison is sponsored for and aft by morticians--a rather grisly image juxtaposition.

*In early 1986, New York State began to introduce new car license plates, called "Liberty plates" because they have a picture of the Statue of Liberty on them. The license plates are stamped out by...prisoners at Auburn Penitentiary.

*There are few things that people in our society look down upon as much, and view as hopeless and unusable, as garbage. In salvaging perfectly good castoffs in the Syracuse University area, including top-notch clothing, we have often found that people will have nothing to do with even the most expensive top-of-the-line items, even after they have been thoroughly cleaned, if they learn that they come from the garbage. Thus, what is one to think when devalued groups are relentlessly garbage-imaged, as exemplified even more dramatically than usual in recent Massachusetts developments. There has long been a house of correction on Deer Island in Boston harbor. Eventually, a sewage treatment plant was added to the site. With plans to greatly renovate and expand this sewage treatment plant, the question became where to move the prison. One proposal has been to move it to another Boston harbor island, namely Moon Island, and--believe it or not--also locate a garbage incinerating plant there. Furthermore, it was planned to locate another Massachusetts house of correction in Suffolk county on the site of a former garbage incinerator. (Source item from Gunnar Dybwad)

Size & Enlargement of the Gulag

*More prisons have been built in the past 15 years in the US than in the previous 100 (Augustus, No. 7, 1986).

*In just three years (1980-1983), public expenditures for prisons increased by 50%. The total cost of imprisonment averages out to \$170 per American (SHJ, 14/7/86). Ohio's 12 penal institutions are equipped to hold 12,500 inmates, but were holding 20,200 and were expected to double by 1990 (Institutions, Etc., 9/85).

*According to Augustus (1/86), the District of Columbia imprisons 1.2 people for every 100 population. If one subtracts from this children, the elderly and the handicapped, it becomes a phenomenally high rate of imprisonment, probably close to 1:50. Subtracting women from this, it may come close to 1:25.

*The Syracuse jail situation exemplifies some of the insanities and atrocities in this particular human management business. The jail was designed to hold 213 prisoners, but in 10/85, it held 249--one reason for the overcrowding being that the prison has been earning about \$1 million dollars a year by accepting overflow prisoners from Long Island county about 350 miles away (SHJ, 10/2/85).

*This is very hard to believe, but the city of New York itself announced plans to build 2 municipal jails for 700 inmates each with its own money, though to be operated by the state in remote locations of the state several hundred miles north of the city, thereby also meeting a need for employment in those localities--not to mention assuring society of future human management jobs because this sort of thing is guaranteed to produce recidivism (SHA, 19/10/86).

*There is yet another prison construction scandal, this time in Quebec where a new \$68 million prison is to be constructed in a remote location only because it is the electoral district of Canada's Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney. It is well known that this sort of thing severely disrupts family ties, and that such family ties are the single biggest reducer of recidivism after prison release. This development speaks badly of the Prime Minister (Globe & Mail, 9/10/86).

*When the mayor and all four city commissioners of the town of St. Mary in Kentucky opposed the location of a prison in their community, a circuit judge simply issued an order dissolving the city in January 1986. (Source item from Wayne Marshall)

*In 5/86, the US Attorney General said to the federal prison wardens that the increasing federal prison population was a sign that the criminal justice system was becoming ever more effective. The truth is that it is a sign that crime has increased dramatically (Augustus, No. 6, 1986).

*Prison overcrowding may be dramatically relieved by the appearance of AIDS. Between 1981-1985, almost 200 NYS prison inmates died from it, another 44 were treated for it, and another 200 showed signs of having it (SHJ, 25/9/85).

The Ship of Fools

*Toward the end of the Middle Ages, communities paid mariners to take their unwanted people far away and abandon them there, hence the image of the "ship of fools." The custom has never really ceased.

*We have previously reported various proposals to resurrect the old prison hulks (old ships used as floating prisons), and yet another instance of this is a proposal to build 4-story prison barges in and for the Netherlands (AP, in SHJ, 22/11/85). New York City is considering pressing three retired ferry boats into service as floating jails, to be tied up at the docks of Rikers Island Jail in the East River (USA Today, 10/8/86; source item from Darcy Miller). Note also that a private prison firm is named Bannum, which sounds like "ban 'em."

Beating Human Services into Prison Shares

*Plans have been announced to turn the Western State Hospital in West Virginia into a prison. (Source item from Chris Harper) As in many other locations, the local population is not very happy about this development. Like group homes, everybody wants prisons, but not anywhere near them.

*Idiot asylum, lunatic asylum, jail house and out house? In April 1985, a number of buildings at the Coldwater Regional Center (for the mentally retarded) were converted to a prison, and parts of it have begun to be used for mentally disordered people (The Arc, Winter/Spring 86).

*The Greater Albany Chapter of the American Society for Public Administrators has given awards for outstanding public administration to the director of the Craig Developmental Center (for people with epilepsy and mental retardation)-- and to New York's Commissioner of Correctional Services who put a prison on the grounds of Craig. (Source item supplied by Jerry Melville)

*Several floors of the Pittsburgh YMCA will be used as a prison, right across the street from Point Park College. For once, we applaud the positive juxtapositions, but must admit that we do find them a bit peculiar.

Miscellaneous Prison News

Theresienstadt, LA. We reported on a new federal prison in LA, the major function of which is to keep illegal immigrants in an inaccessible place so that they can be deported with least interference. This prison is said to be rather pleasantly appointed, with an attractive appearance in a bucolic setting, and many more amenities than prisons ordinarily provide. We might therefore conceptualize it as the Theresienstadt of federal prisons. Theresienstadt was the one of the many Nazi concentration camps during World War II which was so pleasantly set up that even neutral Red Cross observers were deceived about the fact that it was a concentration camp. Also, much like the Louisiana prison, Theresienstadt served as a transitional concentration camp for many of its inmates, on the way to places such as Auschwitz.

*The so-called Attica Correctional Facility is supposed to be a maximum security prison in Western New York. It was proposed in 1983 to build a special unit within Attica for 150 of the state's most dangerous prisoners. This facility has been referred to as a "super-security maxi-maxi-prison," and also as a "super-maximum prison" (SHA, 27/11/83).

*We recently reported about the new practice of tracking prison parolees and mentally handicapped people by attaching radios to them. Lake County, Illinois has recently adopted this method to track prisoners on a work release program. The technique is now promoted with the argument that it would permit letting more prisoners loose and relieve the pressure on prisons.

A prison - nursing home link. We have recently been informed that the private corporations that operate detention centers for the federal government along the US-Mexican border also operate nursing homes. (Information from Candace Cassin) This reminds us a little bit about an old joke, part of which revolved around a physician whose specialty was "homosexuals and hemorrhoids." Yet there are still people who would deny that any message is being conveyed by an agency running prisons and nursing homes. The same man who founded Hospital Corporation of America and made a big success of Kentucky Fried Chicken later started Corrections

Corporation, a private firm that operates prisons on a contract basis for public authorities. He even managed to hire the president-elect of the American Correctional Association. One of the services they perform is to imprison illegal immigrants and do much of the work in their deportation. Much private enterprise language surrounds this new development (Cedar Rapids Gazette, 3/1/84; source item supplied by John Morris). One private prison outfit has the name "Behavioral Systems Southwest," and uses a building as a prison that was once a convalescent home.

Prison Violence & Deathmaking

*Newsweek carried a cover story on prisons on 6 October 86. In Texas prisons, between 1/84-9/85, there were 80,000 incidences of violence, 622 inmates were knifed but survived, and 52 prisoners were knifed to death by fellow prisoners--8 in 10 days alone. Amazingly, each death was dealt with as a separate incident rather than as a part of an overall pattern--much as we see happen in human services where one can see one incident investigated after another with no one ever pointing out the systemic patterns and causes. Yet in Texas, it costs \$70,000 now to operate one prison cell a year. The article underlined that in much of the US, the prison system is simply out of control. It is ideologically bankrupt and demoralized, a great proportion of the staff hate the prisoners, yet at the same time, many of the staff are crooked themselves and import all sorts of contraband into the prison for money, such as drugs. State governments simply lie about the conditions in the prisons until they are driven against the wall by evidence that will convince any jury. Thirty-three of the states now operate their jails under the supervision of some federal court, as a result of court orders to clean up the prevailing atrocities. One of the sad things about the Texas prison system is that when it underwent reform, one kind of violence simply replaced and vastly exceeded another one. Previously, trustees had kept order in the prison by a very crude form of beating up or even killing those who got out of line. After the reform, violence became random, and vastly more frequent: prisoners simply violated each other with little rhyme or reason.

*The guards in the only maximum security prison in Ontario, the Millbrook Correctional Center near Peterborough, complained that the inmates were fed a steady diet of violent movies, such as "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre," "Nightmare on Elm Street," and "Body Double." The Texas Chainsaw Massacre has been described by one film critic as "an absolute must for all maniacs and blood drinkers in need of a few tips." The prison guards believe that these films churn up the prisoners and increase the likelihood that they will assault the guards. The prison superintendent defended the practice by saying that it was very hard to buy any films that don't show violence, and that the only films that are shown are those that have passed the censorship board (Boston Globe, 20/7/86; source item from Susan Thomas).

*According to the medical records of the Indiana State Reformatory, its medical director not only had prisoners function as his substitutes in diagnosing and treating other prisoners, but he also prescribed plain saline solutions in place of pain killers for inmates dying in excruciating pain from cancer (Indianapolis Star, 3/9/86; source item from Joe Osburn).

*One of the big scandals surrounding the prison scene is the crookedness of so many guards. These commonly sell drugs and weapons to the prisoners. One guard at one of the "correctional facilities" in New York admitted earning \$6000 selling drugs, including heroin, but was given immunity for testifying in the slaying of another guard.

*Few people realize how much the American prison population has served as guinea pigs for medical experiments. Indeed, at least one prison (the Montana State Prison) has even had its own medical research center operated jointly with the University of Montana so that research could be conducted right at the prison.

*In NY prisons, the suicide rate increased 85% in 1984 alone. Almost all these suicide victims were under 30, and 41% were below 21 (SHJ, 25/9/85).

*A survey of county jails in California found that in one prison, 73% of the women miscarried after the 20th week of pregnancy, and only 21% of pregnant prisoners delivered live babies. This miscarriage rate is 50 times the state average, meaning that chances of miscarriage are 5000% higher. All of this practically means that pregnant women in such prisons are virtually sentenced to involuntary abortions. Elsewhere, the situation is not as bad, but it is still awful. For instance, in two California state prisons, the live birth rate was only 44% (Youth Law News, 11 & 12/85; source item from David Ferleger).

Liberation of Captives

*An Indiana woman has become the godmother of a young man who shot her son to death in 1973, and has been pleading for his release from prison. This is a remarkable story of forgiveness (Indianapolis Star, 9/11/86; source item from Joe Osburn).

*Newsweek (9 June 86) reported on an increasing tendency for judges to sentence offenders to punishments other than prison. At worst, the offenders have no higher recidivism rate than those who got imprisoned instead. This in itself is a powerful argument for such kinds of "alternative" sentences.

Criminal Justice Tales

*We commented before on the new "stun guns," an \$80 device which, powered only by an ordinary 9-volt battery, can be touched to any part of a person's body where it will deliver an electric shock that deprives the person of voluntary muscle control for about 1 minute, and it takes 4 additional minutes for the person to regain a sense of balance. The device works through clothing and even leather jackets. The device has begun to be used by police to incapacitate violent people or those who resist arrest. A fully-charged stun gun can down 40 people, not to mention animals. Some police officials believe that it may replace mace and even the police "night stick." We can fully anticipate widespread use of this device not only by police, but also by human service personnel. The device should prove particularly popular when police deal with mentally disordered people. Sure enough, at a children's day care center in California, 10 children, including 4 babies, were punished with shocks from a 50,000-volt stun gun for offenses such as talking during nap time (Cedar Rapids Gazette, 20/9/86; source item from John Morris).

*A form of legal torture in the American criminal justice system is the use of a device called the "black box," introduced in the late 70s. It is placed over wrists that are already handcuffed in order to keep the prisoner from tampering with the cuffs. Unless the prisoner holds his entire body in an awkward, rigid position, the steel from the black box will cut into his wrists. After only a few hours, the hands of many prisoners swell up enormously (Augustus, 1986, No. 2)

*During the 15th and 16th centuries, it was customary to have an orchestra play during judicial interrogations that used torture, in order to drown the victim's cries and thereby prevent the spectators from developing sentiments of pity for the victim (Fouquet, 1971, p. 45).

*About our society's response to juveniles who have been interpreted as violent, Jerome Miller said that there are certain things that we can say with great certitude: such youngsters are put into locked facilities if slots are available regardless of the particular nature of their offense; most children found in locked settings have not actually committed a crime of violence, but were found unmanageable in other settings; they have usually not been given an opportunity to be served in a different kind of setting; and once they have been locked up, they have the highest recidivism rates (Augustus, No. 3, 1986).

Judicial Murder

*According to a recent US Supreme Court decision, there is no constitutional impediment to the execution of criminal offenders under the age of 16. In US history, 287 juveniles have been executed for crimes, 20 such convicts now sit on death row, and 30 states and the federal government permit such executions (Institutions, Etc., 11/83).

*A particularly ironic standard operating procedure for the execution of criminal offenders in the state of Idaho is to sequester the executioners with a psychologist for 24 hours after an execution (SHA, 16/3/86). Also, in some states, persons to be executed receive injections of Valium on their last day, including one such injection only 10 minutes before being escorted into the death chamber (SHJ, 6/12/86). There is something unbelievably macabre and cynical about this practice. It is also a practice that the medical profession should ~~make~~ sure to declare unethical for its members.

*The countries most firmly committed to the judicial death penalty are South Africa, Iran, Russia and China. We would consider all four totalitarian regimes--and yet we are trying hard to catch up with them in our use of the death penalty. None of the 21 European countries belonging to the Council of Europe employ the death penalty (Sojourners, 11/85).

*Recent studies indicate that far from serving as a deterrent, an increase in the meting out of the death penalty actually increases the number of murders committed. If this finding is valid, then it would certainly be yet another example of the principle that violence begets violence. In this instance, official violence would be begetting unofficial violence (Augustus, No. 3, 1986).

*Insofar as both state and federal governments are contracting out all sorts of things, there is also talk about states contracting out capital punishment to private firms. Conceivably, something like the Hang Company might become a growth industry, with investors eagerly acquiring stock in it. (Source item from Gregor Smith)

*About the same proportion of prison inmates as the general public approve of capital punishment (NCR, 20/12/85).

*For many centuries, there were 13 steps leading up to a place of execution, such as the gallows, and this is or was also true of the execution chambers in prisons. In California, as in many other places, executions were always scheduled for Fridays, presumably so that the condemned person would identify with Christ (Fools Die on Friday, 1947).

The Rich & The Poor

*For some reason, nothing excites our furor poeticus as much as the issues of poverty and homelessness. The American "social poet" Edwin Markham wrote "The Third Wonder," which goes:

"Two things," said Kant, "fill me with breathless awe:
the starry heavens and the moral law."
I know a thing more awful and obscure,
the long, long patience of the plundered poor.

*According to a report of Interfaith Action, which is constituted by several major Protestant and Jewish denominations, the gap between rich and poor in the United States is now the widest it has been since 1947. Since 1979, there has been a 51% increase in the number of children living in poverty, and since 1980, federal taxes paid by people below the poverty line have more than doubled.

In an age in which the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer, American Express advertised very tastelessly (e.g., Science 11/84) that "some people have evolved more than others," and these are the ones who have American Express cards so that "they are welcomed at the world's finest hotels, resorts, restaurants and shops." (Source item submitted by Karl Williams)

*To temporarily pretend to be poor has always been chic among the affluent, whence came the custom of "slumming" during the Depression. It is hard to distinguish it from mocking the poor. Taking films, videos and pictures of street people has become exceedingly popular in NY. One can buy a "coffee table edition" of a book on "shopping bag ladies" for \$16.95, quite possibly containing pictures of homeless women receiving a cup of coffee. One observer said that what is needed is more compassion and action, and less media PR (Catholic Worker, 12/85). A famous comedienne has been available for clubs and TV doing a shopping bag lady routine. One corporation that made use of "bag lady entertainment" at a national party for its franchise owners in 1983 was Holiday Inns of America. It is particularly ironic that a corporation concerned with housing for middle class-and-up people would make fun of the homeless. (Source item from Ted Johnson) In New York, Tiffany's recently featured a window display selling a diamond necklace juxtaposed to the image of a ragged "bag lady."

*How far removed people have become from even the most normative responses to suffering people was illustrated by a letter to Ann Landers (20/2/86, Daily News, p. C 34). The letter reported that on a subway train in New York, an elderly woman gave a measly one dollar bill to a very bedraggled man--apparently a street person--just before she exited the train, saying "I believe you dropped this," apparently to spare him embarrassment over the fact that she was giving him alms. Responded Ann Landers, "What a heart-warming story!...That woman on the train symbolized the best in all of us." In former days, such helping was so normative that it would not have attracted any attention. Today, it is so rare that even the smallest such gesture draws rave reviews from observers and Ann Landers. One dollar barely buys a cup of coffee these days, especially in New York!

*Because of an overdue utility bill of \$400, the local power company cut off the electricity at a residence for the mentally retarded in Dandridge, Tennessee (AW, 26/2/84).

*According to a study conducted by the American Friends Service Committee and the American Civil Liberties Union, farm laborers in Florida are "among the worst fed, least healthy, and most despairing in our nations," and 40% are living below the poverty level (Sojourners, 6/86).

*Where the American government puts its values becomes clearer when one looks at whom it gives chauffeured automobiles to. One each are given to the Supreme Court, and the Departments of Commerce, Education, Interior, Energy, and Housing and Urban Development. The Treasury and Justice Departments get four each. The State Department gets 13--and the Defense Department gets 60 (Harper's, 6/84).

*Not uncommonly, people with vested interests will say the right thing for the wrong reason, or promote a right cause with unworthy motives. An example of this is a recent book (Losing Ground) written by Gilder, an advocate of supply side Reaganomics. In it, he argues correctly that federal welfare programs perpetuate poverty, but then claims that slashing social spending would be the greatest favor the government could bestow upon the poor. Gilder strongly documents his case. During the 1970s, US federal social welfare spending doubled from about 150 to \$300 billion a year, even after adjustment for inflation. Yet the percentage of the population below the poverty line rose from 12.6 to 13% even as the Gross National Product rose an average of 3.2% a year. Gilder errs in claiming that the major problem with such federal spending has been that it destroys the motivation of the poor and minority groups by teaching them that they can do as well or better on welfare than working. Strategies much more subtle than this are at work. Gilder advocates that welfare be handed back to state and local government, which we believe to be what we call a "preferable disfunctionality." As a general principle, disfunctionalities that are closer to home are to be preferred to those that are further away and on a higher societal level.

*One of the most exciting developments in housing for the poor has been an experiment by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development that would give poor people housing vouchers of about \$265 a month toward the cost of housing that they would find themselves. In the past, HUD has overwhelmingly promoted segregated ghettos of the poor. However, the idea of the poor choosing to live where they want to will probably be so offensive to people that it is extremely unlikely that this plan will become standard nationwide. Of course, such a plan would save billions of dollars, but the whole point of the current deviancy-making business is that money must be circulated rather than saved (Source item from Jacquelyn Mincey-Cone).

*A Syracuse Jail Ministry volunteer (Frank Woolever) discovered that of the 227 prisoners in the Syracuse jail on a given day in 1986, 28% did not have one single penny in their prison accounts, meaning they would be unable to buy such things as shampoo, toothpaste or cigarettes. More than half of the total population on that day had less than \$1 in their accounts (Thursday's Obligation, Autumn 86).

*Apparently, food stamps are grossly underutilized. In the greater Nashville area, only about 40% of those eligible took advantage of them. Partially, this was out of ignorance, and partially because of shame, the hassle, and the modest benefits of the program (SEHS News, 4/86).

*The imperial structures detest any personalistic voluntary engagement of people with the needy, and especially so if they cannot control it. Two vignettes below exemplify this.

From her home in Fort Wayne, a woman distributed groceries, soup, sandwiches and clothing to the poor, and sometimes put up homeless people overnight. The city government moved in and forbade her charity because it was illegal to distribute food--even canned goods--except from a free-standing structure. It is inconceivable that city governments could be concerned with the health of street people whom they otherwise ignore or treat very badly, and one must therefore conclude that this

measure was simply yet another attack on street people and the poorer of the poor--part of our nation's genocidal deathmaking against its more devalued segments. It was probably also an effort to scare off volunteers from solidarity with the poor (Fort Wayne News-Centennial, 11/1/86; source item from Howard Traxmor).

A woman in a poor part of Philadelphia noticed that many children in her neighborhood were eating out of garbage cans. Moved by compassion, she started sharing some of her own food from the front steps of her home, and eventually escalated to packaging full meals in boxes which she handed out. When she called some of the local agencies to tell them about the plight of the children, they began to support her financially to start a more organized food program. So she began to distribute meals more systematically, and in the courtyard of an apartment project where many of the hungry children lived. One day, the state's Department of Education began to contribute money for the food--and in short order, it was discovered that all sorts of strings were attached to these funds. The first requirement that was "discovered" was that the food had to be eaten within sight of a program supervisor, which necessitated (a) that the site where the meals were handed out had to be moved out of the courtyard to the street where she could overlook the operation, and (b) the children were no longer allowed to take any of their food home. The next requirement that was "discovered" was that food thusly funded could only be served if the children were sitting down. Volunteers showed up one day delivering 11 tables and 27 benches that they had built. All this eventually required that the street had to be barricaded off during meal time. Also, because by this time there were 320 children speaking 10 different languages, interpreters had to be deployed to explain the requirements to them (AP, in SHJ, 14/8/86).

*A member of the St. Joseph **Catholic Worker House** in New York, formerly a prisoner, composed the following poem (CW, 8/86):

Upon arriving at this house,
I happened to see a mouse,
And to my surprise, he said,
"Welcome to St. Joseph House."
I saw a cockroach climbing up the wall.
The roach stopped and then began to fall.
Before he hit the floor,
He gave one last roar,
"Help the poor!"

Homelessness & Street People

Looking Back

I've seen the good side of life,
I've seen the bad,
I've seen the happy side,
I've seen the sad,
I've mixed with the rich, the poor as well,
I've tasted paradise, been in hell,
I've travelled the world, to China and back,
had plenty of jobs, been given the sack,
Drank myself silly, been locked up in jail,
Never had money to pay up my bail,

Fought in a war that lasted six years,
Nothing was gained but blood, sweat and tears,
Married two women (but both are now dead),
Gave up my house, went tramping instead.
Now I am homeless and dossing as well.
Could it happen to you? You never can tell!

From Avoiding Institutions, by Nelson,
Sternberg & Brindley, 1982.

*Homelessness has become one of the most studied social phenomena of the past quarter century. It is fascinating to contemplate that social sciences and human service professions have expended so much effort studying this population, and so little being close to it.

The number of the homeless in the US is intensely contested, with the more imperial forces trying to downplay the extent of the problem. Estimates range from 250,000 to 3 million--a difference of a full order of magnitude. People also dispute what constitutes homelessness, but one authority said that no matter what definition one uses, homelessness is growing precipitously. The average age of the homeless has sharply decreased to the mid-thirties, and while 30-50% of the homeless are believed to be former "mental patients," families are the fastest growing segment among the homeless, usually young women with two or three children. Most of these mothers appear to come from broken homes themselves and to be unstable. About half of their children are growing up disturbed, retarded in development, battered, etc. In time, they will provide a tremendous pool of food for the post-primary production human service economy. Aside from the dumping deinstitutionalizing, the disappearance of low-cost housing and the break-up of the family are believed to be major contributors. For instance, in New York City, single-room dwellings shrank from 170,000 in 1971 to 14,000 by the mid-1980s--yet President Reagan once commented that the homeless are homeless by choice. One bright spot is that the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Pew Memorial Trust have awarded \$25 million to 18 localities to be spent on hands-on health care for the homeless, and the projects are supposed to continue after the grants terminate (Science, 2/5/86).

*Not only are there vast numbers of homeless people in every city of any size in North America, but homeless people are also wandering about in the countryside, though much more in some regions that have some mysterious appeal than others. Some of them are hitchhiking, but start walking about when they cannot get a ride. Some go into the woods of the northwest and live off the land. For some reason, the Western deserts seem to attract others. A woman living along a desert highway in Utah has given overnight hospitality to 5,000 homeless wanderers in a 6-year period, i.e., more than 800 a year on the average, sometimes 16 in a single night. Most of them were alienated veterans or dumped mental patients (AP, in SHJ, 16/9/86).

*Apparently, children who are homeless in New York City are not even counted among the homeless. This may include runaway youngsters who fled there but knew nobody and did not have any money. According to one estimate, there may have been up to 20,000 such youngsters in New York City in 1985 (Newsweek, 6/1/86).

*The city of NY put a family with four children in a so-called welfare hotel (housing a total of 262 homeless families at an average charge of \$1500 a month) interpreted by critics as a "fire trap and health hazard." While the parents were out, fire broke out in which the children perished. The parents were charged with "endangerment," to the outrage of many critics (SHA, 13/7/86). The reason the parents were out was that they were looking for returnable bottles (SHJ, 14/7/86).

*More homeless people in New York City live in shelters today than did in the depression year of 1933, but if you listen to the mayor of New York City, you would think that being homeless in NYC is better than a weekend at the beach: "It so happens that the homeless in the city of New York are given beds, sheets and blankets and medical care and three meals a day and a sanitary facility and showers are all made available to them and everybody knows that." (SHJ, 19/5/86)

*An overnight shelter for street people in Syracuse is located in an old warehouse building next to a creek that serves something like an open sewer--and smells like it. Anybody who goes there to do something for or against the homeless will get a noseful of sewage odor most days of the year, setting up a strong but probably quite unconscious image association between street people and sewage. Furthermore, the facility is located on two dead-end streets, clearly marked with dead-end signs. Some people unfamiliar with the power of imagery see that as something positive because it reduces traffic.

*Any adult should remember the days when police used to pick up the street bums when they were found in places where they were not gladly seen. Then all this became illegal, and instead, the streets began to be sanitized of street people by medicalized quasi-ambulance units staffed by people in white. In Syracuse, they have changed the uniforms back to black, and the street people cringe as much when they see one of these vehicles cruising up as they used to when the squad cars appeared.

*A homeless man died near one of Los Angeles' busiest intersections and lay there for days, decomposing, while gardeners watered around him and pedestrians walked by ignoring the body (AP, in SHJ, 21/8/85).

*So-called welfare hotels in New York City to which the welfare department sends homeless people on an ad hoc basis have been making a killing, so to speak. One of them was found to have made at least a 50% profit. Usually, the places are very dingy but in 1985 they rented for \$60 a day for a 1-bedroom apartment.

*A homeless couple, one of them epileptic, found a small cave in the same park in Manhattan which has the Cloisters Museum, and lived there for 6 months without anybody being aware of it. There is a major expressway within a few yards, and millions of people live around, and it was only when the man needed medical attention because he had taken a medicine overdose that they came to anybody's attention. The empire promptly sealed the cave. People must either live like everybody else or, if homeless, live homeless like everybody else (AP, in SHJ, 2/1/86).

*An article in The New England Journal of Human Services (#2, 1986) examined the problem of transportation facilities, such as bus stations, railroad depots and airports, being used as de facto shelters by homeless people. Often, more such people will be found in facilities such as bus depots than used to be found on the typical ward of a mental institution. Because many of the homeless are mentally disordered, a transportation facility can take on the appearance of an inadequately supervised psychiatric ward. However, as is only too often the case, authorities are much better at description than prescription, and the article implied that the answer would be found in putting the brakes on deinstitutionalization, and in reinstitutionalization.

*More ships of fools. Sending destitute people on a one-way trip on a bus is widely called "Greyhound therapy" (e.g., APA Monitor, 2/84). In St. Louis, it has been proposed to ship all the homeless street people to Times Beach, a town that has been damaged by floods and contaminated by dioxin. One homeless family in CA was given a one-way bus ticket to AZ, which has acquired somewhat of a reputation as a "mecca" for the indigent. In 9/86, New York City once again recruited a hotel in New Jersey (another state!) to house some of its homeless families (NCR, 10/10/86)

*A lapel button popular in Fargo, ND, proclaims "-41° keeps out the riff-raff." (Homelessness in America, 1985)

*A man wrote a letter to the Syracuse newspaper proposing a new name for a Reagan-type America, "the Grate Society," in which the poor would be assigned to all the available sidewalk grates whence they might get some heat. They would also be given a map of the local parks, a hibachi, and perhaps a daily dose of ketchup (remember it being ruled a vegetable by the Reagan administration a few years ago).

*In 12/85, authorities in Washington, DC, prevented the erection of a statue, across from the White House and next to the national Christmas tree, of homeless people huddled over a street grate, judging this to be "in poor taste." (Source item from Milt Baker)

*We were recently told that a certain person got a "doctorate in homelessness." Everytime we tell somebody about this, we can hardly stop laughing. It reminds us a little bit of a medieval work in the genre of the fool literature entitled Doctoratus in Stultitia, which means a doctorate in stupidity. If they give doctorates in homelessness, might there be also doctorates in the offing for carlessness, shoelessness, clotheslessness and maybe even headlessness?

*Around 1985, about \$7000 of public and private monies were being expended annually in the New York City area for every single person in the low-income group, but only 37% of this money reached the poor in cash. The rest, i.e., almost 2/3, was consumed by the agency structures serving the poor (McKnight, 1985).

*The 150 street people who ate Thanksgiving dinner at a Rescue Mission in Los Angeles in 1984 donated \$175 in pennies, nickles, dimes, and quarters toward famine relief in Ethiopia.

Signs of the Times

*Isn't it ironic that in the city of New York, there are about 100 facilities or services called Paradise something or other, 27 Edens and 9 Arcadias (Time, 9/6/86). Perhaps this is an indication of wishful thinking on the part of the namers, since New York City could hardly be called anything near paradisial.

*It is a sign of our times that as of 1986, one of the most unproductive sectors of our society, namely lawyers, get one of the highest starting wages, namely \$65,000 in New York City, and \$75,000 if in investment banking (Time, 28/4/86).

*In Syracuse, some of the biggest fire engines in the world flash three kinds of lights (one red, one white, and one strobe), run their sirens, blow their horns, and rev incredibly loud engines, but since everybody else runs their sirens all the time (as one would expect in a collapsing social order), and anywhere in the general downtown area one might hear several score sirens every day, people have quit paying attention. In 9/86, several fire engines were racing to an alarm, all of them emitting their various attention-getters, but a man stepped out right in front of a quarter-million dollar engine because, as he said later, he didn't hear it. In trying to avoid hitting him, the 31-ton engine ran into a store front and flipped over.

Signs of the Christmas Season

*For the first time ever, the Federal Bureau of Prisons gave its wardens the option in 1985 to ban Christmas packages to the 37,000 prisoners in its 46 federal prisons, and apparently the vast majority decided to exercise this option (AP, in SHJ, 17/12/85).

*It seems that every December issue, we have new news about the popular song "Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer." During the 1985 Christmas season, a Davenport, IA disc jockey announced that he was depressed, and he was going to cheer himself up by playing the song. He had played it 27 times before frantic station officials succeeded in jerking him off the air.

*This Christmas, at least US children are apt to get war and violence toys. Since 1982, sales of war toys has risen around 600%; they have become the leading category of toys sold, with a record \$1.2 billion for 1985 (CPF Bulletin, Fall 85; other source items from Gordon Du Bois). In case you didn't know, there is such a thing as war cartoon TV programs, and TV showing of such cartoons increased from 1.5 hours per week in 1982 to 27 hours per week in 1985. A naive person might almost infer that somebody was trying to prepare American children for war (Sojourners, 2/86). On the other hand, Finland has banned the manufacture, importation and sale of war toys as of 1/87, following a precedent set by Sweden 10 years earlier (NCR, 17/10/86).

*A Christmas tale from the ghettos. A 6th grader from the Chicago slums wrote a Christmas essay that went roughly like this: "Santa gets to my house in the projects. Then he said, 'Ho, ho, ho, Merry Christmas.' Then they shot Santa in the mouth because they figured he was a burglar." (Newsweek, 6/1/86).

Human Service Interfaces with Religion

*In an age in which people expect some technology (preferably simple) to provide a direct and speedy solution to every problem, much as one might pop a pill against a headache, it is both saddening and amusing to note how modernized technological thinking has penetrated into people's relationship to the spiritual realm. A good example are the increasingly technological approaches to attempts to gain spiritual depth. Indulgences, medals, and mindless rattling through the rosary have been replaced by classes in transcendental meditation, yoga instructions, and something that one could almost call "prayer therapy" or "prayer technology." This latter strategy goes into minute details on how to sit or breathe for prayer, how to set up the environment so as to make prayer as "easy" as possible, and perhaps even to get us as quickly as possible to the ultimate insights, truths, or contacts with the divine.

One expression of this prayer technology is "imaging prayer," which can even become "prayer imagination therapy" in the hands of a "Christian counselor" or "Christian psychotherapist." The new prayer technology has developed its own extensive vocabulary, such as "centering silence." In one example of an approach along these lines (World Peacemakers, Winter 1983), the picture of the earth seen from outer space was displayed, and after a period of "centering silence," a tape of "music of the spheres" (i.e., non-music music) was played, followed by "sharing the experience" and reports by participants, who allowed as how it all had been "a totally new experience." Of course, in using the tape, one "prepares the mechanical aspects ahead of time so that there will be no unnecessary distractions." Similarly, the scripture reading was played off a tape so that no one would, by having to read it, be left unable to participate in the meditation.

True, something like imagination prayer is ancient, as for instance practiced by Ignatius of Loyola. Perhaps there was something about the time which lent particular merit to the practice or perhaps there is even merit to it for persons of a certain psychological make-up regardless of the times. However, the new prayer technology springs from an entirely different background, and has the flavor of primitive paganistic idolatry.

*A drug abuse rehabilitation program is named Pellion, after the Pelius Mountains which, according to Greek mythology, were stepping stones for the gods when they ascended into Heaven.

*The latest efforts to turn religion into a human service technology involves "aerobic praying" which combines Christian song, music, and dancing in a program called Praise-R-Cise (Newsweek, 19/4/82).

*There are people who try to show that there are parallelisms between theology and the way the human brain is structured or functions, and this field they have called "neurotheology."

*Cleanliness next to godliness, or the power of prayer therapy. A woman reader wrote to Ann Landers how she overcame a hand washing compulsion by praying. Ann: "I endorse any successful solution to this hideous problem." Considering that Ann Landers' single major solution to any problem submitted to her is mental counseling and psychotherapy, we can see here clearly an example of the common practice of the mental professions to treat faith, worship and prayer as human service technologies, on the same level as tranquilizers, surgery, and physical exercise.

*There has been a sudden and almost explosive interest in the adoption of computer systems by Christian churches. Cisco Computer Systems Company of TX has copyrighted the name "The Ark," which it advertises as being "the first affordable computer system for churches." "Why pay more for less?" (E.g., The Episcopalian, 2/83; news item submitted by Doug Mouncey.)

*It used to be that institutions and similar organizations and settings had chaplains or chaplaincy departments. The latest trend has been to rename such chaplaincies as being "offices of religious affairs," apparently thereby distantiating the agency from the chaplaincy, making sure that having a chaplaincy would not be mistaken as an endorsement of religion.

*There has been a study of people who have recovered after having been at the threshold of death, or after having been given up for dead, which is much more scientific than some of the popular books and accounts of the 1970s (Recollections of Death: A Medical Investigation by Michael Sabom). It was found that there was a remarkable uniformity in the experiences reported by the subjects. They reported feeling a much greater sense of reality which they had difficulty putting into words (e.g., "it was realer than here"), a sense of delight and ecstasy, absence of pain and a sense of timelessness.

*There are a staggering 120 million people in India who for generations have been excluded from the caste hierarchy, and have been ostracized, segregated and untouchable. They call themselves Dalits, i.e., the broken or oppressed ones. Even animals got better treatment than they. About 13% are Christians, which amounts to about 80% of all Christians in India, but the more privileged minorities of their own churches have participated in the ostracism, and have dominated the Dalits (Sojourners, 1/85).

*An ancient principle in the early Christian church was that it was impermissible to accept donations that had some kind of moral taint attached. It is for similar reasons that the Training Institute decided several years ago not to seek federal subsidies, and to be otherwise very circumspect about its sources of funds. However, human service agencies have been notorious for being literally promiscuous as to the kinds of monies they accept, and they will commit almost any atrocity on their clients as long as it is lucrative for the agency. The Chicago Sun-Times (in Syracuse Herald American, 4/9/82) reported an interesting exception to this general practice. There once was a motorcycle club that in time evolved into a club for homosexual men in Chicago. This club has been raising money for several years and

giving it to all sorts of charities, including the Little Brothers of the Poor, and the Misericordia Home. However, when they contributed \$1400 to the Chicago Salvation Army, the check was returned. The newspaper article was not very sympathetic to the Salvation Army, pointing out that the biggest donations to charity in most big cities come from crooked business people (at least, that is what the article said in so many words). Said the article with a sneer that if the Salvation Army started asking everybody about the goodness in their hearts, it might end up using its kettles for making soup instead of catching dimes and quarters.

*One of the first women ordained a priest in the Episcopal church said that if women had made the rules, both heterosexual and homosexual acts in or out of marriage would be considered sacramental, and "abortion would be a sacrament if women were in charge" (PLN, Spring 86).

*In 1984, the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan began to display a four-foot cross that had "Christa" on it instead of Christ, complete with undraped breasts. This sent a lot of people into paroxysms of admiration and others of rage (Time, 7/5/84, p. 4).

*In 1984, the Easter issue of Hustler (pornographic) magazine featured a woman on a plexiglass Crucifix. Insofar as Hustler magazine can hardly be considered to be a bastion of defense for the dignity of women, this display can only be interpreted as blasphemous. In fact, it apparently contributed considerably to the current backlash against pornography, though there is no reason to expect that this backlash will be anything but temporary.

*Wanted: pastor of Protestant Church; must be divorced. Recent studies disclosed that more Protestant pastors are getting divorced, and their congregations are not only increasingly accepting of divorced pastors, but even see pastoral divorce as an asset because such a large proportion of the membership may also have been divorced (AP in Syracuse Herald Journal, 4/12/82).

*Modern-liberal Christian churches have been hankering for members who evidence "openness, spontaneity, affirmation, inclusiveness, love, righteous indignation, sexual freedom." An erudite though characteristically obscure German theological treatise (Abendmahl für Hunde) (Holy Communion for Dogs) argued that there are millions of heretofore excluded candidates for church membership: dogs. The author, with the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, built on Singer's epochal 1977 Animal Liberation in pointing out that dogs are better brought up these days than children, and that they are loyal, loving and caring; and lacking the characteristics of self-centeredness, egocentricity and selfishness, they are the only appropriate Christ symbols of our day.

*Oral Roberts claimed that God told him in a 7-hour conversation that God had chosen him to find a cure for cancer, and that each of his television viewers should send him \$240 to complete the Tower of Faith Research Center in Tulsa. Each such donor was promised up to 14 "special blessings" and 48 tapes of Roberts' commentary on the New Testament (The Episcopalian, 3/83; news item provided by Doug Mouncey).

*What is one to think of an advertisement (in Exceptional Parent, 6/82) by an institution for developmentally handicapped adults named Bethany that showed a nun with a child, and that announced that it is "a ministry of the sisters of the Order of St. Anne, a religious community in the Episcopal Church," and that it is "non-sectarian"?

*A publication dealing with a Christian approach to handicaps has the peculiar title "Is Christ Disabled?"

*Unfortunately, a manual on ministry with disabled people (still available in 1986) was entitled Ministry with THEM.

*According to a poll, only 14% of retarded Catholics in RI are getting to church on Sundays.

*A very unusual phenomenon is a Jewish chapter of the Association for Retarded Citizens in Oakland County, MI. It operates a citizen advocacy program (ARC Michigan Focus, 4/82).

*People's confusion about human suffering is so great in this age of hedonism that Rabbi Kushner became instantly famous--and even almost something of a folk hero--when he wrote a book (and began to give lectures based on it) When Bad Things Happen to Good People (Schocken, 1981) which resolved the dilemma of how an omnipotent merciful God could permit suffering by proposing that God was not omnipotent after all, only merciful, and thus unable to stop suffering. Other people resolve the dilemma in a much more logical fashion by denying the existence of God.

*Pater Noster of a deaf person: ...And forgive us our signs, as we forgive those that sign against us...

Child Rescue

*A recent baby in Minnesota is believed to have been the smallest one to survive premature birth, 4 months prematurely, weighing 12 ounces and measuring 7 inches (PLN, 9 & 10/86).

*There were two very similar cases (Augusta, GA and San Jose, CA) in Summer 1986 in which "brain-dead" women pregnant by men other than their husbands were to be taken off life supports, in one case upon the request of the husband, and in the other that of the woman's parents. In both cases, the women's lovers, and respective fathers of the babies, got court orders to continue the life supports until the babies could be delivered. One of the two babies survived the birth. These episodes evidenced a commendable attitude by the respective fathers, since the babies were expected to be of extremely low weight (SHJ, 17/8/86; Cedar Rapids Gazette, 26/7/86).

*There is a new theory on how to care for premature babies, namely that they should be carried by the mother "kangaroo-style," meaning skin to skin beneath her blouse in an upright position between the breasts, thus keeping the baby warm and giving it frequent access to breast-feeding. This may be a particularly useful technique in underdeveloped countries. (Source clipping from Carolyn Bardwell Wheeler)

*The Child Welfare League of America conducted a study of families who had adopted physically or mentally handicapped children. 73% of the parents said that their experience had been good or excellent, and 86% said that they would do it again. Some of the children involved were among those otherwise considered hardest to place (AP in SHJ, 16/7/86).

*A creative adoption program has been launched in IA. Church congregations are asked to identify one of their families that is prepared to adopt a child with a handicap, and then to accept the child into the congregation and be supportive to the family. Resource materials and a panel of adoptive parents are made available to interested groups (Iowa DD News, No. 2 1986; source item from John Morris).

"Euthanasia"

*In our opinion, nourishment is not a "treatment." Of course, there are lines of defense whereby nourishment can become ever more indirect and denormalized, and could indeed eventually require very heroic and extraordinary measures. It is only at that point where, conceivably, nourishment having become tortuous, it might be refused. Whether it might be withheld when it is not experienced as tortuous is very dubious.

*In 4/86, the NJ Superior Court ruled that the family of an elderly woman in a nursing home could withdraw her feeding tube, assuring death by dehydration and starvation, even though the woman was neither terminally ill nor comatose (PLN, 7 & 8/86). As of 10/86, and in NJ alone, three cases were still pending where, under "right to die" petitions, people not on the verge of death would be starved to death in hospitals or nursing homes (NCR, 31/10/86).

*The MA Supreme Judicial Court ruled in 1986 on the so-called Brophy case. According to hearsay, Mr. Brophy once said that he did not wish to be a "vegetable," and that if he should become incompetent, he wanted somebody to "pull the plug" on him. Eventually, Mr. Brophy became comatose but not brain dead, and the cost of supporting his life became something like \$180,000 a year. According to medical testimony, he might live another 30 years, and might even improve considerably through surgery. However, his family petitioned that nourishment be withdrawn from him so that he would die from dehydration and starvation. A lower court approved this claim, which was appealed--and approved. Accordingly, nourishment was withdrawn, and Brophy died a week later. (Source item from Cathy Costanzo)

Resources

*For many years, the (National) Association for Retarded Citizens has published tax guides for families with a retarded member. The Exceptional Parent also puts out an annual income tax guide, usually in its December issue.

Job Exchange

An opening in beautiful NH for a coordinator of services and material supports in integrated settings to developmentally handicapped people. Many service people in that region have been to events such as we teach. Contact Anne Rugg, CDSA, 30 Maplewood, Suite 212, Portsmouth, NH 03801.

Oppression

Oppression is a universal historical phenomenon, with only temporary relief in an occasional locale. It involves the use of power (ultimately relying on physical force, deathmaking, and the threats thereof) by one party to gain material advantage over another party--the oppressed one. Since devalued societal status is so highly correlated with involuntary material poverty, oppression plays a major role in making and keeping people devalued.

One major form of oppression in many societies today is to invest resources that could have been spent on reducing poverty into the military, military hardware, preparation for war, and war itself. In the US, this is the single biggest material cause of poverty, and therefore of all sorts of ills as well. We will now look at two sectors of oppression.

Oppression By Business & The Wealthy

*Between 1950 and 1983, corporate taxes declined from 28 to 6% of the total federal receipts while individual taxes increased from 39 to 49%. Even though corporate action contributes much more to the problems of this country than individual action, less and less of the corporate profits are going into solving national and societal problems. US corporations paid an average of 16.1% US taxes on their US income, which is vastly less than what they or others pay abroad, or what they are supposed to pay: 46% on income above \$100,000. Some industries, such as the chemical industry, even "paid" a negative tax, i.e., it received a "tax refund" from the government, i.e., the government, and thereby individual taxpayers, are actually subsidizing the industry, all in the guise of the industry having tax liabilities. Other business sectors that "paid negative taxes" were insurance, financial institutions, aerospace, telecommunications, railroads and broadcasting. The only ones that paid high rates (roughly 36%) were trucking, tobacco, paper and wood, and wholesalers. Even in some of these cases, there are hidden subsidies, as when the public pays taxes to build the roads for truckers to use, or pays the medical expenses for those who smoke tobacco. Even while all these shenanigans are going on, the people who are ultimately the most responsible for our wealth, the farmers, are getting squeezed tighter and tighter. Rural land values have been falling, and farm real estate taxes rising, which certainly is a very effective way of pushing farmers into bankruptcy and off the land--often, so that it can be paved over. All this makes one want to join Citizens For Tax Justice, an organization that collects revealing statistics like this.

*In 1984 alone, 40 US companies with combined profits of \$10 billion not only paid no federal taxes, but even got tax refunds of \$657 million. Of 275 very profitable corporations, 129 didn't pay a cent in federal taxes during at least one of the four preceding years, and 50 during none of these years. Among the "artful-tax dodgers" were Boeing, Pepsico, TransAmerica, Greyhound, Grumman and Lockheed.

In 1984, 40 large US companies with a combined profit of \$10 billion paid not one cent in corporate taxes. 129 firms that did well had paid no taxes in 4 years. Twenty-six companies even got refunds on taxes paid in previous years, including AT&T even though it had earned profits of almost \$2 billion. Its refund was \$242 million (Time, 9/9/85).

Boeing, which turned a \$2 billion profit, not only paid no taxes but got \$285 million in tax credits benefits back from the government. The whole thing is astonishing: what individual tax payer who pays no taxes gets tax payments made to him or her by the federal government?--especially if they make a lot of money? (Newsweek, 9/9/85)

*For 1985, it is estimated that taxes lost through loopholes will exceed all the anticipated tax revenues. Furthermore, the nation's top 6 defense contractors between 1982-85 paid only an average tax rate of 3.5% (CC, 9 & 10/86).

*We remember the E. F. Hutton affair, where the financial firm eventually pleaded guilty to 2000 counts of fraud. Various types of corporate crimes are believed to cost the US between \$40-300 billion (AP, 31/12/8).

*Rich people in Canada are almost as clever as rich Americans in avoiding taxes. In 1984, 8000 who made more than \$50,000 paid no tax, and of these, 239 who made more than a quarter million paid no tax (Toronto Star, 25/1/86; Source item from Doug Mouncey).

*In 1984, 12% of American families owned 38% of the wealth. Further, .5% of families controlled 27% of the wealth. The typical American family had a net worth of \$33,000. People in farming, forestry and fishing had the smallest net worth, \$5600 (SHJ, 19/7/86).

*Ever since 1975, the TI has distributed reprints of the work of John McKnight who teaches at Northwestern University. Recently, McKnight (Salt, 6/86) offered the following comments about American consumptionism. He called it "America's principal sin" because it is the principal cause of: the degradation of the Third World, leading the world into an impossible industrialism that will make a desert out of it, the collapse of the inner cities and the pollution of the world. It speaks to our lack of wisdom and justice because Americans thought that they could buy these things.

Oppression Linked to Militarism

Not only does militarism impoverish one's own, it also impoverishes and cripples when it engages in warfare.

<u>The Works of Mercy</u>	<u>The Works of War</u>
1. Feed the hungry	1. Destroy crops & land; seize food supplies
2. Give drink to the thirsty	2. Contaminate water
3. Clothe the naked	3. Burn possessions, including clothes
4. Take in the homeless	4. Destroy homes, scatter families
5. Visit the sick	5. Inflict wounds, burns
6. Liberate captives	6. Imprison dissenters
7. Bury the dead	7. Make the living dead

*The Worldwide Institute issues an annual report on environmental and economic conditions worldwide. The 1986 report says that 1985 global military expenditures were \$940 billion. About half a million scientists are employed in weapons research, which consumes more money than all the research combined on new energy technologies, human health, agricultural productivity and pollution control even as one-third of the earth's land surface is threatened with desertification. Global military expenditures exceeded the income of the poorer half of humanity (World Watch Institute; source item from Chris Liuzzo). One of the most dramatic steps forward in demilitarization has been made by China which cut its military budget nearly in half, and which has also achieved dramatic improvements in the health of its people. In contrast, the US almost doubled its military expenditures between 1980 and 1985 (NCR, 19/9/86).

*Costa Rica is the only country in modern times that actually abolished its army (in 1949) and beat its swords into plowshares. However, the US has exerted relentless pressure upon it to remilitarize itself, and has already given the Costa Rican government a great deal of money for "security." Costa Rica has been a calm and stable society in a sea of turmoil. With remilitarization will come abandonment of neutrality and, quite likely, internal and possibly external conflict (NCR, 1/11/85).

*World-wide military expenditure is something on the order of about \$1.3 million a minute (NCR, 1/11/85).

*The US, Russia, and France account for 83% of the world's arms sales, and between them exported \$26.8 billion worth in 1984 (NCR, 24/5/85).

*A prominent former West German politician (Erler) published a book in 1985, entitled Lethal Aid, in which she observed that the foreign aid given by the wealthy West to the poor countries was so structured that it actually increased rather than decreased the impoverishment of the latter. In other words, without foreign aid, the people in the Third World would have been better off. Assuming that this is true, it would certainly be a typical example of the detoxification of deathmaking by making it appear as its opposite.

*Between 1960 and 1980, the gap between the wealth of the rich and the poor nations doubled.

*Between 1963 and 1981, military research and development constituted between 49-54% of all federal R & D--but then it shot up in a steep curve and reached 72% by 1985 (Science, 2/5/86).

*To fire a shell from a tank costs over \$1200, the fuel to fly an F14 fighter costs around \$1300 an hour, and one of the cheapest missiles around (an air-to-air missile) costs \$100,000; the B1 bomber costs \$200 million.

*Some of the biggest US advertising firms are handling the recruitment advertising for the armed services. N. W. Ayer handles the US Army recruiting for \$68 million; J. Walter Thompson handles the Marine Corps for \$13 million, and Ted Bates handles the Navy for \$17.31 million. While formerly, military advertising appealed largely to high school youth, today it appeals to a yuppie college crowd. The National Guard uses fantasy appeals such as "command your own small unit in combat, control a fast moving tank, direct a missile launcher." (Gray Panther Network, Winter 85)

*One of the "Church fathers," Gregory of Nazianzus (330-389 AD), said, "War is the father of taxes." We continue to remind readers that the proportion of the federal budget earmarked for defense grossly underestimates the proportion that is actually spent on war and preparation for war. The true proportion for fiscal year 1985 has been estimated to have been 63% (CW, 1 & 2/86).

*The Pentagon has identified 40,000 nuclear targets in the Soviet Union, planning to hit Moscow with 60 nuclear weapons, Leningrad with over 40, the next 8 largest cities with an average of 13 bombs each, and for the rest of the USSR, 14.4 warheads were allocated for every million humans (Sojourners, 3/85).

*Whatever else may be the truth, the fact is that after Gorbachev came to power, he offered more concessions in the area of arms race containment or reduction than had any previous Russian regime. We suspect that he looked into the future, perceived the awesome realities of nuclear holocaust, and was willing to make extraordinary concessions to avoid such a disaster. Not only that, he probably also perceived what the arms race would be doing to his own country. Ceaselessly, his initiatives and concessions continued to be rejected by the Reagan administration. We can surmise that the concessions that he offered were vigorously opposed by many powerful circles in his own country and his own military. When all of his efforts were rebuffed in Reykjavik, the hawks in Russia who, just as much as the hawks in America, would like to escalate the race and work toward nuclear holocaust, could only have been confirmed and strengthened. We strongly suspect that the Reykjavik disaster, reconfirming America's commitment to death, and particularly that of its current government, will play in history a role similar to other momentous choice points and moments of opportunity that were missed. We suspect that now, both sides will reintensify the arms race, and Gorbachev may even lose power to the hawks. In fact, Russia may conclude that its only hope is a preemptive surprise attack. We also have to keep in mind that while hardly any reputable scientists in the US believe that the "Star Wars" program can ever work, the Russians are paranoid enough to believe it. Thus, we see the Reykjavik conference as the sealing of the impending destruction of civilization and life as we have known it on earth. Unlike most other people, we predicted the Reykjavik conference outcome, and were not surprised by it.

In other words, the TIPS editor believes that the 1985 US-Russian summit was probably mankind's last chance to renounce its self-destruction. Whatever the sincerity and intentions of the Russians were, American intentions were set in stone to give nothing, and to escalate the arms race. When it is all over, and the bitter fruits of Star Wars have been reaped, then--should we still be around--everyone will agree that the insanity of it all was quite foreseeable, and professors will be writing a great many highly-acclaimed books about it.

After the Iceland debacle, a little girl prayed, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, its sure to be a nuclear mistake." (SHJ, 14/10/86) Except we doubt it would be a "mistake." It was all so well-planned for so long.

*The 17/8/86 Doonesbury cartoon spoofed the imperial American arms race rhetoric as follows, implying that President Reagan was speaking.

"One last question, Mr. President. Do you think the billions you've already spent on ABM and space-based weapons research has made the world a safer place?"

"Safer? Gosh, yes, much safer! You see the new ABM technology will eventually protect our first-strike missiles from their first-strike missiles...unless, of course, they try to overwhelm our ABMs with MIRVs, which is why we need space-based weapons as well as lasers to defend those weapons from mines. That way, we'll be able to blow up their mines that blow up our space weapons that blow up their MIRVs that overwhelm our ABMs that blow up their missiles that blew up our missiles, that blow up their country before they blow up ours."

"Thank you, Mr. President."

"Peace."

*Gerard Piel, who is chairperson of the Board of Scientific American and retiring president of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science, said in 5/86 that the Star Wars program was a "hoax" that would prolong nuclear weapons testing indefinitely, involve perhaps thousands of tests, and permanently institution-ize the arms race in pursuit of an "unattainable goal of military superiority." He said that such military superiority no longer makes any sense insofar as "one infinity of destructive power cannot exceed another such infinity." He predicted that the Star Wars program will destabilize both the economy and the social fabric of one or the other party in the arms race, and would ignite World War III (Science, 5/9/86). More than 6500 US scientists, including 15 Nobel laureates, have called the Star Wars initiative "ill-conceived and dangerous," and signed a pledge not to work on it (NCR, 20/6/86).

*Anybody who is not convinced that the US military has increasingly oriented itself to a first rather than retaliatory nuclear strike should read a 1985 book by D. Ford, The Button.

*Infact is the organization which led a relatively successful 7-year boycott against Nestle for promoting deathmaking by discouraging women in the Third World from breast-feeding. The same organization has now announced a boycott against General Electric because of its prominent role in producing nuclear weapons and promoting the arms race. It has challenged the company to live up to its slogan and to "really bring good things to life."

*Years ago, when President Reagan promised a budget surplus by 1984, we pooh-hooded him. In the meantime, his administration has run up a budget deficit that would have been unimaginable even to the most pink-eyed liberals, the trade deficit was running at a rate of about \$120 billion a year, and for the first time in 71 years, the US owes more to foreign lenders than it is lending out in turn. All in all, the government is spending somewhere between \$100-200 billion more than it takes in, and the debt service has become so great that \$2 out of every \$5 of income tax are devoured by it, or a full 50% if government trust funds and federal reserve accounts are included. Many people have not yet woken up to the fact that the Reagan administration has not only spent the nation into tremendous deficits, mostly because of military expenditures, but is mortgaging the future by piling up crushing interest payments on the national debt. These interest payments, \$142 billion now, rising to \$155 by 1988, are higher than the federal budget was under Eisenhower. One problem is that there is no sign that Congress is willing to face the problem (Science, 25/10/85).

Miscellaneous Other News

*The less farmers get for what they grow, the more desperately they try to grow more, and the more they ravage the soil in their efforts. In America's richest farm land, Iowa, two bushels of top soil are lost for every bushel of corn produced. The irony of it all is that the effort will almost certainly be futile. The overarching policies are set against the farmers, and will continue so until a genuine food shortage sets in. In a bizarre sense, it is unfortunate that this might be some years off (Sojourners, 10/86).

*Finally, scientists are catching up to something that the Training Institute has long taught, namely, the more complex things become, the more accidents will happen even when no one and nothing is specifically at fault. Modern technology is at the root of most of the complexity that we are experiencing, and as a result, the sheer number of parts of systems multiply, and often these are tightly coupled so that a small failure sets off a chain of events that leads to big failure before anyone has time to spot the first problem. Many complex modern systems, such as space ships and nuclear reactors, either deal with ever more deadly substances, or are expected to function in ever more hostile environments or with ever greater speed and volume. Efforts to add redundancies and back-up systems often make the system even more complex and even more prone to accidents. All of this increases the risk for so-called "normal accidents," which is also the title of a 1984 book on this topic. (Source from Mark Friedman)

*The city administration of San Francisco has declared that because so many of the 50,000 refugees there from Central America face death if they return, its city employees need not cooperate with the federal government in finding "law-abiding illegal aliens." This is yet another example of how people are driven to civil disobedience by the cruelties of the national government (AP in SHJ, 24/12/85). It is a very stupid national government that thus dissipates the trust and obedience that it would otherwise get from its citizenry.

*Immediately after the Statue of Liberty celebrations in New York City a berserker attacked passengers on the Staten Island ferry with a sword. A tourist couple from KS narrowly escaped the attack with their lives--and were made honorary New Yorkers by the mayor of New York City. Imagine what honor might have been bestowed upon them had the maniac succeeded! An honorary tomb? A permanent honor guard at the tomb? Who knows?

*Much as the American people decided after seeing "The Day After" (depicting nuclear holocaust) that the US government was right in spending as much as it did on nuclear arms, so after the 1/86 space shuttle tragedy, a survey found that 73% of Americans supported the manned space program, and 26% even thought that more money should be spent on it (UPI, in SHJ, 31/1/86).