

# HUNGER NOTES

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## THE LIVELIHOOD CRISIS

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### EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

*Hunger Notes* began exactly twenty years ago, on an ancient Smith-Corona portable typewriter packed along when I came to Washington in May 1975 looking for ways to work on the politics of hunger. The purpose of the slender newsletter was to provide concerned Americans, especially non-experts, with ready access to fresh insights and information they could use to educate themselves and others about tackling domestic and world hunger at the roots. Initial readership was the Episcopal Hunger Network then forming, volunteer "hunger education/action leaders" in parishes and dioceses throughout the U.S. Today's readership for the most part is quite different: faculty and students in post-secondary institutions, policy and program officers in relief and development agencies, and people in the government or in nongovernmental organizations dealing with hunger, poverty, and international development policies.

Twenty years later then, in readership and contents, this modest journal ("newsletter" no longer) is far more sophisticated about the economics, politics, sociology and all the other "ologies" involved in hunger's problematical causes and solutions than in June 1975. Yet, looking back at those early overtures in hunger education (marking my own hunger novitiate), various messages bear strongly on topics in *Hunger Notes*, Spring 1995. In July 1975, for example, a web chart of hunger's inter-related causes includes unemployment, misinformation and false understanding among the non-poor, and faulty social ethics, as when prevailing values in a market economy reward selfishness and unconcern for others in the market's distribution of goods, services and livelihoods. Those concerns appear again on these pages.

An August 1975 editorial inspired by theological reflections of the Reverend J. Bryan Hehir, then associate secretary for Social Development and World Peace at the U.S. Catholic Conference, says: "Charity has to do with sharing with others what one doesn't really need, one's surplus. Justice deals with the distribution of limited resources in a finite world. ... Charity focuses on the motives of the giver. Justice looks at the need and requires a solution of the problem....The unity of good-willed people acting from charity may break down on questions of justice, because these land us smack in the middle of economics where controversy abounds...But the very fact that the experts in economic policy disagree so strongly with one another should give the rest of us hope. If they already understood all there was to understand, how could we...possibly hope for anything better, since things got this way largely under their guidance? ... What would an economic policy which serves all humankind require of us? That is what we need to be about. We will need both charity and justice."

Amen. And also a sound grasp of economics, history, and politics if we want to bring practical wisdom to solutions for hunger.

Contributors to this issue of *Hunger Notes* bring all of the above to our discussion of the mounting crisis of unemployment, rapid economic change, and missing livelihoods -- which is also a hunger crisis. Both unemployment and employment below a living wage cause and perpetuate hunger. Under present trends, unless more is done to help men, women, and youth of working age everywhere, both conditions are bound to grow, causing still more hunger. And soon.

--- Patricia L. Kutzner