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HOMELESSNESS:
RESIDUAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND COMMUNAL
SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Drawing upon demographic data and ethnographic interviews conducted by the authors, the article addresses the question, "Who are the homeless?" It identifies five kinds of homeless people and the sources of the homeless populations in the social structure. It then addresses residual and institutional policy solutions and draws on the efforts of the homeless themselves to advance a collective solution to their problems.

"What we have found in the country,
and maybe we're more aware of it now, is
one problem that we've had, even in the
best of times, and that is the people who
are sleeping on the grates, the people who
are homeless you might say by choice."

Ronald Reagan, 1984

In this article we will address the choices for the homeless in America. These are the immediate choices of individuals to sleep on grates or freeze to risk mugging in shelters or accept the personal abuse of a mate or the impersonal abuse of a state mental hospital. They are also the collective choices of the homeless and the societal choices of what must be done

to repair the ruptures that the homeless represent in social, political and economic systems. Such choices must be made in light of as much information as we can bring to bear on the alternatives.

We hope to contribute to informed choices by adding to the ongoing study of the homeless in the United States which dates from the 1920's studies in Social Pathology at the University of Chicago (Bahr: 1970). Since the displacement of large numbers of people is concomitant with the advent of industrial capitalism it is not surprising that a plethora of tracts attempting to understand the plight of the homeless were put forth in one way or another by such diverse nineteenth century thinkers as Thomas Paine, Lorentz Von Stein, and Henry Mayhew. More contemporary authors who have contributed to the awareness of the problem are, Howard Becker (1963) with his studies of deviancy in the early 1960's, Ann Marie Rousseau with, Shopping Bag Ladies (1981) and Ellen Baxter and Kim Hopper with, Private Lives, Public Spaces (1981). Mass circulation magazine articles such as the Newsweek cover story (January, 1984) have contributed to current public concern.

Our descriptions and the basis of our proposed solutions are demographic and ethnographic data gathered in interviews conducted from January to March of 1984. One of the authors (Roberts) taped ethnographic interviews with 37 homeless individuals in San Antonio and Brownsville, Texas; Phoenix, Arizona; Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Santa Barbara and Sacramento, California. The interviews were focused on the day-to-day routine of the homeless informants rather than on their life histories. Informants were found with the aid of social service agencies, or individuals who work with the poor such as lawyers and ministers. Some of the informants were simply found by happenstance. All informants were guaranteed anonymity and were paid for their interviews. The interviews cited in this article are given from informants in Santa Barbara and Sacramento, California. The ethnographic interviews are based on the techniques of Spradley (1979) which are designed to elicit the world view of the informant along with information about his or her cultural scene and daily routines. Spradley's method of interviewing seems particularly useful since he used it with such great effectiveness in gaining information concerning the lives of tramps in Seattle (1970). Today the

homeless include not only the traditionally recognized tramps but other large categories of relatively recent homeless people.

Who are the Homeless?

It is not easily acknowledged by many in American communities that homeless people do exist in large numbers in nearly every state of the Union. In fact, it is only the sheer numbers of homeless people and their rapid increase which has forced the American public to take note of this tragic phenomenon.

From our observations and interviews, five kinds of homeless people add up to the great majority of those living in the streets. First are those suffering from alcoholism and the results of alcohol use. Second are the chronically mentally disordered. Third are the new poor, especially those thrown out of work by the de-industrialization of frost-belt cities and have moved to sunbelt cities where they have few friends or relatives to help in their search for work. Fourth are those low income people who have been evicted from apartments or homes due to their inability to pay rent or house payments. Low income elderly and the chronically unemployed are most vulnerable to this problem. Fifth are the single parent women, who having been separated or divorced, are unable to meet house payments or rent and who must therefore depend on friends and family for shelter. These women typically move from place to place living off friends or relatives for a few weeks at a time. It is possible also to find these individuals living in automobiles or campers until they "get a break" or some institutional help.

The explosion of the number of these homeless people living in and around city streets is the result of the confluence of political decisions and policies and social trends in American society. In addition to our categorical observations, these political, policy, and social sources of homelessness tell us who are the homeless are and which they are homeless in broad outline. Let us look at two examples.

The Unemployed

Recent political decisions essentially drafted industrial wage workers, minorities, and women as inflation fighters in monetary policies that drove

unemployment over ten percent for all workers (Bureau of Labor statistics, 1983). Such a policy generated thousands of homeless people and conditions for creating more. For example, for these unemployed, insurance benefits have expired. The mortgage or rent has come past due. The tolerance of relatives has worn thin and the decision to migrate to sunbelt prosperity has ended in a tent on the bank of a western river.

The Mentally Disordered

The chronic mentally disordered make up one third to one half of the homeless (Fustero, 1984). By mentally disordered we mean people who have been diagnosed as having a mental disease and who have been processed as patients in mental health institutions. These people are not readily distinguished from other homeless people. They wear the common clothes of poverty and on quick glance behave outwardly very much like others. Most are persons who have been diagnosed as schizophrenic. Yet they mimic closely the behavior of the chronic alcoholics with whom they mingle. The term, "alcoholic schizophrenic," is used to designate the chronic mental patient who lives on the street and appears no different from the chronic alcoholic.

How these chronically mentally disordered people come to frequent the streets of our major cities is a conundrum with origins in recent social policy - a policy that defeats the intent of efforts to "deinstitutionalize" the chronic mental patients.

"Asylums" were run with minimization of costs as a primary administrative objective. Under such conditions, rehabilitation was subordinated to warehousing of society's non-criminal undesirables. Hence, not only was manageability of patients a goal but so was cultivation and retention of patients who were capable of doing maintenance work for the institutions. Conditions in the institutions were largely poor and dehumanizing (For a history and analysis of mental institutions see Scull, 1979, and Rothman, 1971).

The reforms of the late 50's and 60's fostered by social scientists and the Kennedy mental health initiatives attempted to develop alternative mental health services that would make the need for the large, centralized institution obsolete. The most powerful of these reforms was a policy that provided federal financial incentives for the states to discharge their

chronic mental patients to the community and to treat mental patients in their own communities through the new community mental health centers. New forms of psychotherapeutic drugs, legal decisions mandating the "least restrictive setting" for treatment of mental patients (Price and Smith, 1983), and a "can do" attitude on the part of the mental health professions brought about wholesale deinstitutionalization. From 1955 to 1975 the number of patients per year institutionalized dropped from 559,000 to 215,000 (Price and Smith, 1983). The problem, of course, was what to do with the patients who were chronically ill and no longer institutionalized--of between 1.7 and 1.4 million chronic mentally disordered, 900,000 are in some kind of institution (Goldman, Gattozzi, and Taube, 1981). Ideally, they could function in their communities with the help of psychotherapeutic drugs and contacts with therapists. Recent policy has nonetheless undermined the original ideals.

Medicaid, Medicare, and Supplemental Social Security Income provide for patients and the disabled who are poor, aged, or chronically disabled (Price and Smith, 1983). The system of benefits provides incentives for states to discharge their patients to other facilities which can claim federal dollars for part of their care. These alternatives, however, can include nursing homes, which house 750,000 chronic patients, and halfway houses. Neither setting is required to provide mental health services. Often the residence is merely a place to sleep. Moreover, mental hospitalization benefits are limited in time and patients discharged must wait thirty days to apply for renewed benefits. Finally, many of the chronically disordered were severed from the life line of their Social Security benefits by the Reagan administration, having to reapply to secure their source of support. Chronic mental patients, who often are unaware of their own identities, the time of day, or their locations can easily get lost from their "benefit determined residence." Further they often lack the wherewithal to monitor their sources of income and reapply for lost benefits. Brief contact each month with their physicians at the local mental health center may provide medication which then may or may not be taken as prescribed.

Thus, liberated from the back wards of state mental hospitals, the chronic mentally disordered have fallen through the carelessly woven network or recent mental health policy on to the streets of our cities where they join the rituals and destitution of other homeless people.

People Surviving

Together political decisions, policies and trends generate a national population of homeless widely estimated at 250,000 to 2,000,000 (Alter, 1984, p. 21).

These parameters, and the preceding categories and examples, take on more meaning if we look at self-descriptions and survival experiences of some of the individuals that make up the homeless population. The following was gleaned from the ethnographic interviews taken in the Spring of 1984.

Three informants interviewed in Sacramento typify in some sense the varieties of marginality and misfortune which coverage to produce homelessness. Charlie, 26 years old, was unemployed for several months in San Diego. On impulse he left his wife and children to hitchhike to Northern California. He had been on the streets four months at the time of the interview. "I left the car with her (his wife). I got ripped off on my way up her (to Sacramento) at a rest stop, from my wallet and everything I owned. With no ID, I can't get assistance. With no housing I can't get a job, with no job I can't get no housing. I didn't know where to turn."

Derrick, a 46 year old unemployed steel worker from Ohio had found work in Montana but was laid off during the winter months. He had injured himself with frostbite hitchhiking to California. He vows he will never live in a cold climate again because "when you've got nothing out there (in a cold climate) you freeze your ass and that's all there is to it." He had saved for four months to buy his camping tent. He, like the rest of his confreres, had been averaging one meal a day for the past several months. "You go over here to a dumpster at Burger King or McDonalds and get yourself something to eat. That's what you used to do and now they've got them all locked up. It's a \$500 fine or 90 days. Hell, we was saving them money." "Dumpster diving" is only one of the survival skills that become a part of an individual's struggle on the street.

Sam M., or "Mex" as he was called, was a career man in the Army. He had served in Vietnam and began to do heavy drinking at that time. After eight years of active duty his drinking had driven him out of the army. At the time of the interview he claimed he had not had a drink for four years. "Mex" confirmed the idea that coping with homelessness requires reciprocal relationships. Such relationships form a basis for survival and are reinforced by punishment for violation of their reciprocal nature. He described life on the bank of the American River in this way,

You've got to have a buddy, for one thing. If you lay here on the American River, you've got to sleep with one eye open and one hand on your knife in your bag. People would just as soon kick your head in as to look at you. And you've got enough adversities . . . I picked up a guy a couple months ago. He was about 22 and he couldn't make it on the street. I was showing him how to make it, just to survive. I caught him going through my bag when I was down at the river washin' up. When I left him, he wasn't moving. It's just the survival of the asphalt jungle. Cause I know one thing he's got a broken hand and a couple of broken ribs. I just packed up my stuff and left. It might sound barbaric but its just a matter of survival.

For the young and able on the streets, tight loyalties and reciprocal aid exist between partners. When the norms of reciprocity are broken, broken bones may follow. Still this minimal cooperation may be the only buffer the homeless have since they are in the main rootless and without supportive kin.

In the Social Darwinian world of American City Streets in 1984, street people survive by their individual efforts and brief, tenuous, reciprocal relationships rather than by graciousness of the society at large. Washington D.C. has 100 beds for an estimated 20,000 homeless (Alter, et al., 1984). Soup kitchens and food banks are similarly overwhelmed and understaffed with regard to the homeless. Thus in the Reagan years, homeless people sleep on heating grates under newspapers, in boxes, and telephone booths, in plastic tents, in parks, on roadsides and riverbanks. They panhandle, raid garbage dumpsters, do day work

when possible, involve themselves in petty thievery, sell plasma at blood banks (this is difficult to do recently), receive food from church or whatever else one must do to survive.

It is difficult to know what percentage of the homeless would be able to functioning in the mainstream of American society if given the chance. Clearly the cognitively impaired, the emotionally disturbed, and the chronic alcoholic have hampered ability to function at a basic level of social intercourse. Still, there are vast numbers of homeless who lack only the social and economic connections to function in the social world. What then is to be the response to the homeless?

Social Responses to the Homeless

When one begins to think about solutions to homelessness, it is necessary to refer to the examples presented earlier and consider the basic needs of the individual. The current sporadic and insufficient residual response would provide temporary shelter, food, aid in finding work, and help with the various day-to-day dilemmas minimally dysfunctional individuals face in reestablishing themselves in the workplace and neighborhood. For those with alcohol related problem and/or a degree of mental dysfunction, the social solutions are more complex. Institutional responses that track and sustain those who cannot sustain themselves are required. But residual and institutional responses may be supplemented with collective action and communal solutions among the homeless themselves. Let us look at each level of response in turn.

Suppression and Succor

Social policy toward the homeless has fluctuated nearly as much as the economic vagaries which contribute to the causes of homelessness itself. In the 19th century Europe and America we view varying mixes of repression and charity, with the former usually dominant as fear of transients lessens the sympathetic impulse of the public. It might be argued that the response of the public today is in large part a reflection of the 18th and 19 century view of the homeless of earlier periods. We can characterize these views as

denial of the problem, sympathy of momentary nature, middle class resentment and the like.

The residual approaches serve their traditional function of policing the deviants and alleviating their emergency distress as an act of charity (Romanyszyn, 1971). Mark Stern in "The Emergence of the Homeless as a Public Problem," points to the "gift" quality of the residual approach to the homeless. When needs are met in an immediate and face to face way as in charity approaches, then the superior status of the giver and the inferiority and stigma of the recipient are affirmed (Stern, 1984). Equally affirmed, we might add, are the conditions of the economic status quo. The problem is not with the system but with its victims.

The suppression of the homeless ranges widely from attempts to deal with the homeless in a relatively humane fashion to areas where the homeless are treated with official contempt and, in effect, homelessness is defined in vagrancy laws and similar laws as a crime.

Federal responsibility for the homeless has thus far been confined to proposals for shelter provision. A Brookings institution study proposed 1.7 million housing units by 1990 (Alter, 1984, p. 23). In 1984, a Democratic party bill in the House Appropriations Committee would have put \$60 million into shelters for the homeless. Taking the lowest estimate of the homeless population this would amount to 67 cents per day per homeless person. The bill was opposed by the Reagan administration as too expensive (Washington Post, May 5, 1984). It is clear that the homeless will not do well to look for an end to their misery from the U.S. Government. Never-the-less, institutional reforms that would help alleviate the suffering seem obvious.

Economic Policy and Care for the Sick

The federal government and the states take some institutional responsibility for the mentally ill. As discussed earlier, the problem lies in follow up support and treatment for the deinstitutionalized. State-federal cooperation on care for the chronically mentally disordered and substance abusers requires planful appropriation and distribution of funding to insure that the incentive is to provide follow-up care rather than to simply unload patients. The Callahan decision in New York, in effect, held both the city and

the state responsible for providing food and shelter for the homeless (Stern, 1984).

Sometimes pressure for economic change will generate institutional reforms on the part of those in power in order to secure the status quo. Goals for change in the interest of the homeless might include:

1. A guaranteed adequate annual income. An old liberal idea, the population-stabilizing and market-generating capacity of this economic "reform" would have appeal for those concerned with the increasing social disorder which increasingly frequent and severe cycles of unemployment generate.
2. Federal work projects with guaranteed minimum wages in areas of high economic displacement. A lot of socially necessary work needs doing from railroad repair, to water purification plants, to waste cleanup, to manufacture of solar energy devices. Construction jobs would be naturally targeted to federal housing for the homeless and pay a union wage scale.
3. Federal wage supplements to employers willing to hire the indigent.
4. The creation of "urban safe places" for the transient which would encompass few restraints on the homeless but would provide minimal shelter, food and protective services.

Organization for Needs

However effective the residual and institutional reforms, the "primary prevention" of homelessness lies in bringing economic change that precludes many of the conditions of homelessness. Such change can come about by the organized communal efforts of the homeless and their natural allies. But is this a starry-eyed notion or a possibility? We will examine the potential for organized efforts of the homeless themselves based upon our ethnographic data.

For many years, the homeless in the Sacramento area have camped on the banks of the American River. In January of 1984, six of the homeless decided to organize a tent city on the state capital grounds to protest the lack of facilities for the homeless in the

areas as well as the harassment of the group by the police. "The biggest thing" Charlie K., one of the organizers, told me

"is when you sleep on the river bank -- you wake up you're as tired as when you went to sleep. At first crack of a twig you wake up -- it's a matter of survival. Drop in centers are not safe. There's not control there. Just like the mission. They cut a guy's head and took his shirt off him. There ain't no safe place."

The first effort to start the encampment failed because the organizer, Tiny, a 350 pound giant who had collected money for the communal group, left his tent in the middle of the night for parts unknown, money in hand. In spite of this setback however, the homeless regrouped, formed the United Street People's Association and made plans to camp on the Capital lawn. State authorities reluctantly gave their approval to the group with the disclaimer that the homeless would have to provide portable toilets sufficient to the group so as not to use the facilities in the office building. After a week of fund raising the homeless people had arranged for and paid for two "port-a-potties." They had also taken responsibility for keeping order in the camp. Some politicians, reporters, church people and state police were sympathetic to the demands of the homeless. Tents and sheets of plastic were put up to protect the 50 homeless people against the rain and cold. Clothes lines were set up holding large cardboard signs with message such as "Streets are not safe for sleeping", "United Street people -- Here to stay", "Poverty Resistance." Other cardboard signs contained the addresses and phone numbers of Food Closets, Missions, and places to receive used clothing.

Sam M., one of the organizers of the tent city, talked about his motivation for participation.

"Somebody's got to make a stand. There's roughly 80,000 homeless in California . . . This has been going on so long. This ain't but a drop in the bucket. There's 50 people on the (American) river for every person you see here. They're scared--- tired of rejection. They just give up." (What happens when they give up?) "They hit the wine bottle to where they can't do nothin'. Just like me. That's what got me into this situation in the first place. I haven't touched a bottle in 6

years. We've got people trying to get in the Halfway House. That's filled up."

Sam M. describes the dilemma the group faced after losing their money to Tiny.

"The hardest thing to do is to keep people from giving up. I know I'm gonna make it out there because I have for so many years (4). We was on the verge of leaving but we said we'll give it more time. There is some of them out here who can't make it. If it wasn't for them, I would be in San Diego."

Les R., another organizer for the group, had been a homeless person for 2 years. He was the spokesman for the group to the media and had obtained a degree from a California University. When I interviewed him, three weeks into the encampment, he was quite upbeat about the groups prospects.

"It's the people who have been down and now are up that will help us. They know what it is and that is where we get our collective strength. Listen, with this group and the rules we have set up and with us taking turns patrolling it, the violence has been cut down 100 percent. I know we have cut down drinking by 40 percent and drug use is down and we not only care about each other here but we make the outside world understand what's coming down. With people like those teenagers in that tent, to the old timers like me, we've got to say hey, it's time to stop ripping each other off and get something worth while started here. If we maintain it (the Camp), they don't have a reason to make us leave it. We have to keep it clean and well organized."

However, on February 12, 1984, the Los Angeles Times reported that "A group of about 40 campers who have been sleeping in a tent city on the Capital lawn for three weeks to dramatize a plea for more state aid for the homeless pulled up stakes as ordered by state officials" . . . a spokesman for the campers said they may seek another permit in the future depending on what else happens as a result of the tent city."

I had asked Sam M. what would happen if the homeless were removed from the Capital grounds.

"Well, we will try to keep this thing going, you know, down at the river if we have to. All we need

is a place and some few resources. I know we can do the rest of it, which is make a safe place out of it. That bill they have in Congress now for emergency shelter would only provide about 60 cents per person per night. We could do it on that and just a place to stay. We learned that we could do it."

I had heard that the homeless had reestablished their tent city near the American River but I was unable to contact them.

Despite Sam M.'s enthusiasm, communities for the homeless run by the homeless do seem to face overwhelming obstacles. Nevertheless, the homeless do seem ready when possible to organize and confront the middle class world with their plight. On March 7, 1984 one hundred homeless people bearing flowers and the names of the dead on crosses marched through Los Angeles Skid Row in memory of the homeless who have died. One of the groups sponsoring the memorial was the Poor Peoples Committee which is composed of the formerly homeless. Again the idea of the poor helping the poor comes into bold relief.

Between Los Angeles and Sacramento lies the pleasant beach city of Santa Barbara and it too has a share of homeless people. Here also is organizing coming from the homeless themselves. It is roughly estimated that there is a homeless population of 1500 in the city and the number of emergency beds for the population is 100 (Homeless Peoples Newsletter, February 1984).

Nancy M. one of our informants in the Santa Barbara area is an exceptional individual in several ways. She is a second generation homeless person. She is blond, in her thirties, about six feet tall with hands which show the results of a great deal of manual labor. She delivers several hundred Los Angeles Times a day for a steady income. She has a nine year old son and another child on the way. She lives in the back of a beat up camper. "I'm a fortunate homeless person because I haven't lost my job and my salary is \$600 a month. I pay \$100 per month on my camper and when that is done I will have equity built up."

Nancy also knows nearly all the homeless in the city and spends a good deal of her time supporting their efforts to improve their lot. Moreover she is one of the founders of the Homeless Peoples Association

and editor of the Homeless Peoples Newsletter. She routinely lobbies the mayor, chief of police and other authorities in behalf of the homeless.

Nancy concurs with the Sacramento homeless in several ways.

"People are afraid here. They feel safer on the streets than in a shelter. You'd have to have a shelter that's totally different . . . Middle class people think that homeless people are bugs. It's their fault, they're bad. Why don't they get a job . . . Five officers in Santa Cruz got caught playing Russian Roulette with street people. They would hand cuff them, put a spent bullet in their gun. The guys were on their knees just begging for their lives, (what happened then?) They got fired. There is a hatred for the transient and homeless."

Nancy M. does appear to have the ability to draw the street people of the city together, to form alliances with other concerned people and to generate a sense of community within the homeless population. The homeless in Santa Barbara tend to congregate around a gigantic tree, the Morton Bay Fig, in a small park. Here Nancy and a friend circulate copies of the Homeless Peoples newsletter. This costs about \$40 per month to produce and the funds of this are raised by Nancy and others.

The Homeless Peoples Association which consists of street people and those living in their vehicles is centered around the fig tree and its environs. The H.P.A. motto is "We want to be off the streets as much as you want us off the streets" and it's long term goals are communal in nature. They are attempting to get city ordinances changed which provide fines or arrest for those sleeping in their cars. They also work to establish a park or property where the homeless can gather without fear of violence by criminals or the police. They also provide emotional and legal support for the homeless, emergency food and a day job service at no cost.

Much of this effort toward community has come from Nancy M.

"I see some really neat progress in some things. My boyfriend and I put an ad in the paper once a week. (That's all we can afford). It's for cleaning, painting etc for \$5 per hour labor. It's

only a day's job but it sounds good to the guys. It puts money in their pockets and they can treat themselves. You can see the difference in these guys. They feel good earning a little money. They say aw, I don't have to work. If I was in their position, I'd be saying the same thing. Because the reason I'm not working is I don't like to work. They say that when they're depressed. That's the psychology of it. I know the hardship of those hooked on booze or drugs but a lot of single men don't take either."

When Nancy's communal effort run her afoul of the local powers that be,

"I'll go to the city council and try to do something and the jungle (where the homeless congregate) will be raided by the police. One time they said, you can thank your friend Nancy for this one. Just what I need, you know . . . I'm really good friends with the rest of the street people. They've lived in my camper. We do dumpster diving, you know garbage diving. We do some feeding. We make the best stews you can imagine."

Nancy's vision is a free environment for the well functioning homeless. For those with special problems such as emotional disturbance or alcohol problems, small violence free shelters should be put in place. For those who simply need a change of clothes, a job and shelter, there should be uncrowded public space. Like the homeless in Northern California, Nancy is committed to the idea that homeless people can run their own communities with some resources from the outside world. In fact, the trust and charismatic nature of Nancy makes her uniquely qualified to work on communal ventures with other street people. The homeless in Santa Barbara are fortunate in that they do have financial support for advocacy work as well as socially concerned lawyers who contribute time to legal disputations concerning the homeless.

Although Nancy continues to have dreams of her own such as owning a mobile home, she with several other homeless people in Santa Barbara are committed to creating a community of the dispossessed. "It cost me \$40 to put out the newsletter but I think we are connecting up with other street people. I don't know how much work I'm doing but if I keep talking I guess it helps. Yelling, even."

Even with all her energy, Nancy realizes that the creation of a "safe place" for the homeless, organized from the bottom up, represents a long struggle. For Nancy's friends the organization, the face to face meetings at the Fig tree, and the cooperation are coming into place. It is no accident that the communal ethic for all its difficulties becomes a reality during the Reagan years when personal survival becomes problematic or even impossible through personal efforts. "The transformation therefore occurs when impossibility itself becomes impossible, or when the synthetic event reveals that the impossibility of change is an impossibility of life" (Sartre; 1976).

Finally, there is the material problem of "place." In a word, where are the homeless to be allowed to do community experiments? Our interviews show that a significant segment of the homeless have the ideological commitment and organizing skills to make a worthy attempt at community building. Yet these skills and commitments are a chimera if they are not allowed to take shape in a safe place. A "place" for the homeless is always contingent on community good will and more importantly, upon financial resources. This then is a political problem dealing with government at all levels and it is a government which (in 1984) is not favorably disposed to "maximum community participation."

Conclusion

The homeless in America are symptomatic of the decay of the social and economic system as it lurches from boom to bust in quickening strides. The human casualties can only become more visible, more desperate, more numerous but not inevitably more powerless if, as we have observed and suggested in this paper, they are more organized in their own behalf. Fundamental structural change in the service of people and their basic needs seems more remote now than in the past. Yet, through cooperative energy, people can dramatize their plight and make demands upon the more fortunate.

As several of the homeless informants pointed out, cooperation to some degree is necessary for survival on the streets. It is clear that a more satisfactory solution to the problem of the homeless will require cooperation between those with leadership potential

among the street people and those middle class institutions with access to money and resources.

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