

hunger - why?

a report from a special AFSC team

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INTRODUCTION

In June, 1969, six people began a special research and action project in southern New Jersey. These included a Radcliffe student, a Catholic nun, an architecture student, and high school students from suburban Chicago, western Pennsylvania and Michigan.

Those six "young people" constituted the first field team of the Call to Research and Act to Stop Hunger (CRASH), a special summer project sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).

For more than a year, the attention of the American public has been directed to the problem of hunger in this country. Through the focused eye of television, Americans were shown that hunger and malnutrition exist here. The CBS documentary "Hunger in America" brought hungry Americans into American living rooms.

A special study group produced a startling report - Hunger, USA. Senator George McGovern, in his capacity as chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Hunger and Malnutrition, began hearings around the country to find out from the people what it was like to live in poverty. Other government agencies and groups have also begun to take a close look at hunger and malnutrition.

Hunger. Malnutrition. These are words usually associated with the underdeveloped nations of the world, or with life in centuries past. That such words describe conditions in the United States of America, a nation of abundance and undreamed of technological development, is a morally reprehensible fact.

Faced with a belatedly informed but still unbelieving public, and given a concern for both the dignity and continued existence of man, the AFSC decided that the summer of 1969 was the time to launch a program such as CRASH.

The American Friends Service Committee is an organization based on the beliefs of the Society of Friends (Quakers). It has had a continuing concern for the sufferings of man for its fifty-two year history. The AFSC has attempted to alleviate the physical suffering by operating programs focused on refugees, victims of war, and by similar activities. It has also sought to affect those conditions which deny and jeopardize the dignity of man by means of programs aimed at the empowerment of people to achieve equality in housing, employment and education.

CRASH was designed and operated by "young people", most of them staff of the AFSC. From June, 1969 to September, 1969, CRASH teams worked in 35 counties of 15 states. More than 200 people, the majority of them high school and college students, were involved in the program.

The program was designed so that teams could locate in a county, investigate the operation of the federal food programs in that county, share information with county residents, and attempt to generate action by local individuals and groups to improve local conditions. CRASH also included community groups working in their own counties.

The teams were investigating programs of the federal government aimed at getting food to people who could not on their own obtain an adequate diet. These federal programs include the donated commodity program, the food stamp program, the school lunch program, the emergency food and medical services program and the supplementary food program.

The federal agencies responsible for these programs are the Consumer and Marketing Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Procedures

CRASH was not intended as an investigation of hunger or malnutrition. The participants were not medical personnel, nutritionists or doctors. Others, more qualified, have done and are doing such investigations. CRASH assumed that there was hunger and malnutrition to some extent in every county in America. The federal government offered food programs to alleviate those conditions. CRASH wanted to find out whether such programs were reaching the people who needed them, and how those programs operated.

Each CRASH team member was provided with a kit of materials which included a description of federal food programs, a survey questionnaire and a guide to citizen action. There were also materials put out by the federal agencies most closely related to the programs.

The kit was developed by a group of CRASH program associates in the national office of the AFSC. The materials were derived from the laws as written and from the suggestions and analyses offered by the National Council on Hunger and Malnutrition, the Columbia University Center for the Study of Social Welfare Policy and Law and from various staff of the AFSC.

Equipped with this kit, CRASH participants located in selected counties. A conscious effort was made to avoid those areas which had already received publicity relating to the existence of hunger and malnutrition. Such a concentration on the "worst" counties would have, we felt, obscured the wide-spread nature of the problem.

Instead, teams of "outsiders" located in areas where AFSC already had some involvement, and where local people could both assist and carry on the work of CRASH. In addition, wherever a local group wanted to participate in the program, CRASH provided information and the same assistance provided to the "teams" composed mostly of college and high school students.

CRASH research was not scientifically-designed random sampling. Nor was the questionnaire a professional survey. The teams used what data already existed on poverty and food program participation pertaining to their area. In addition, the teams concentrated heavily on interviewing officials, food program participants, interested and involved citizens. Finally, each CRASH participant reported what he had observed.

The teams of students were in an area for six to eight weeks. In that period of time, the most they could do was gather information, share that information with local people and assist them by letting them know what options, in the nature of food programs and/or action, were open so that they could improve their own situation.

Finally, the information and experiences of all those involved in CRASH were compiled so that a report could be made to those administrators at all levels of government most directly involved in operating food

programs. Such information was also intended to be shared with those local people and groups with whom CRASH worked during the summer and with the general public.

The CRASH Report

This report will encompass what the teams -- both indigenous and "outsiders" -- found out this summer. The completeness of data varies from county to county. We realize that this report is neither comprehensive nor "scientific". But it is a report on existing conditions in those counties where we worked. It is a report on what over 200 individuals saw, heard and learned about the operation of federal food programs in some 35 counties across the country.

At a later date, CRASH will present a county by county report. This overall report is based on information gathered in the following areas:

Pennsylvania

Delaware County
Philadelphia County
Berks County

New Jersey

Cumberland County
Salem County
Gloucester County

North Carolina

Warren County
Greene County

Georgia

Clayton County

New Mexico

Bernalillo County (Albuquerque)
San Juan County
Sandoval County
McKinley County

Arizona

Maricopa County (Phoenix)
Apache County

Colorado

Boulder County

Florida

Manatee County

Minnesota

Ramsey County (St. Paul)
St. Louis County

Oregon

Multnomah County (Portland)

New York City

South Carolina

Kershaw County
Williamsburg County

Maryland

Allegany County
Caroline County
Talbot County

Maine

Penobscot County (Orono)
Kennebec County (Augusta-Hallowell)
Bath-Brunswick area

California

Riverside County
Orange County
San Diego County
Los Angeles County
Ventura County
Monterey County
San Francisco
Sacramento County

FEDERAL FOOD PROGRAMS

CRASH concentrated its efforts on five federal food programs: donated commodities, food stamps, the school lunch program, the emergency food and medical services program, and the supplementary food program.

All these programs have their basis in laws enacted by the Congress. The oldest is the commodity program. This program is tenuously based on national legislation. In 1935-36, Congress enacted a number of laws aimed at aiding the agricultural economy of the country. Among these were the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1935 and Public Law 740320. These statutes authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to dispose of commodities (farm produce) by "...increasing their utilization... among persons of low-income groups...". Section 32 of the law provided the money for this part of the program by establishing a set percent of the monies collected through customs duties which should be set aside for the usage of commodities.

For all practical purposes, that is the legislative base for the donated commodities program. In addition to the Section 32 monies, Congress does appropriate more funds for the program. All other regulations are administrative rules formulated by the Department of Agriculture. This Department decides which commodities are offered to the states and also is the ultimate determiner of eligibility standards.

The food stamp program began as a pilot project in 1961 and became an official program in 1964. Its intent was to provide a means by which low-income families could expand their food purchasing power. Basically,

a family puts up so much money and gets that much plus a bonus in the form of coupons which can be redeemed only for food at certified grocery stores. The laws include restrictions which prohibit using stamps for "imported" foods.

The school lunch program provides that grants-in-aid, cash assistance or other means be used to insure that children receive nutritious lunches. It was intended, when the National School Lunch Act was passed in 1946, that the program establish a non-profit operation. A formula was devised whereby the states matched federal funds for school lunches. During the debate on the bill, it was suggested that the states could count any money which children paid for lunch as their part of the matching funds formula. This is part of the law and has enabled many states to avoid appropriating funds for school lunch.

Observation of these three programs form the basis of the CRASH report. The other programs -- supplementary food and emergency food and medical services -- proved to be so small and operational in so few places that the data we do have is insignificant.

ARE THESE PROGRAMS REACHING THE POOR?

First of all, from our experience during the summer, it would appear that no one really knows how many people are poor. Most states use the Office of Economic Opportunity definition -- a family of four earning less than \$3000 a year. Yet this takes into account neither the ages of children, the local cost of living, national and local inflation or whether that income is spread out over 12 months or three months.

Despite this, CRASH teams used figures on poverty which they obtained from the 1960 census, from more recent OEO reports, from state studies, and sometimes from business group projections and surveys.

For purposes of determining welfare payments, each state decides how much money a family or individual needs to maintain a decent standard of living. There is generally a sliding scale which takes into account the number of people in a family, how much income they receive, and the amount needed to supplement that income to achieve the stated minimum. Most states have provided funds which, at best, supplement a family's income for a total of 80% of the stated minimum. We are aware of no state which allocates enough funds so that a family's income can be raised to the state-defined minimum.

Each state also sets its own standards for welfare eligibility. Besides categorical qualifications -- blind, disabled, family with dependent children -- there are income qualifications. These income levels usually form the basis and major criteria for eligibility in the food stamp, commodity and school lunch programs.

Federal statutes and regulations indicate that those eligible for welfare are also eligible for food programs. Most, though not all, states and counties stipulate that those receiving public assistance are automatically eligible for food programs. However, in almost no case that CRASH investigated were all those on public assistance participating in food programs. Most certainly, those officially living below the poverty level are not all participating in the food programs.

CRASH felt that there was a way to estimate how many families should be participating in the food stamp or commodity programs. There are figures on the number of families living below the poverty level. There are figures on how many families and individuals receive public assistance. These two indicators of need should give a rough idea of how many families need food assistance. This is what CRASH found:

In Clayton County, Georgia:

2,140 families live below the poverty level
809 families receive public assistance
306 families, or 1103 individuals, receive commodities

In Delaware County, Pennsylvania

12,000 families live below the poverty level
5,735 cases receive public assistance
1,904 cases receive food stamps

In Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

18,141 families or 74,000 people live below the poverty level
12,723 households or 58,000 people receive public assistance
15,000 households or 63,000 people receive stamps

In Warren County, North Carolina

Approximately 12,000 people live below the poverty level
1,000 people receive public assistance
3,000 people receive stamps

In Greene County, North Carolina

12,000 people live below the poverty level
2,264 people or 429 families receive stamps

In McKinley County, New Mexico

2,816 families live below the poverty level
742 cases or households receive commodities

In Manatee County, Florida

10,000 families live below the poverty level
1,400 households receive commodities

In Multnomah County, Oregon

19,732 families live below the poverty level
4,027 families receive stamps

In Allegany County, Maryland

5,210 families live below the poverty level
609 families receive stamps

In San Diego County, California

61,000 families live below the poverty level
39,000 families receive commodities

In Riverside County, California

13,000 families live below the poverty level
8,463 households receive commodities

These figures come from official sources, from reports and from interviews with welfare and food program officials. It is evident that food programs are failing to reach large numbers of the poor. We can concede that in some instances people choose not to participate in food programs. People also choose not to apply for public assistance. But when the numbers of families not participating in food programs reach the thousands, the reason cannot be simple de-selection. CRASH tried to find out what figures cannot tell.

WHY AREN'T FOOD PROGRAMS REACHING THE POOR?

General Barriers

1. Information. One major reason people do not participate in food programs is that they simply do not know they exist. While some people have never heard of food programs, others have such great misconceptions about the programs they never know that the programs might help them.

CRASH found few food program administrators who felt that part of their job was to inform people of the existence of their programs and their operation. In fact, few administrators had any idea of who the target audience for such information might be. In every area in which CRASH operated, we asked those officials administering the food programs how many people were eligible. In every instance, the officials either said they had no idea or gave us the figures indicating how many families were receiving public assistance. No official offered the number of people or families officially below the poverty income as the potential eligibility figure for food programs.

CRASH also asked these same officials how they informed people about their programs. A minority of counties send official announcements or pamphlets to those families already on public assistance. Most announce the existence of food programs through welfare case workers, public health nurses, newspapers and radio, or by relying on word of mouth. Some officials felt it was not their business to publicize food programs at all.

For example, in California, only those public assistance cases with "unmet needs" are informed officially that they are eligible for food stamps. In Los Angeles, only 20% of those receiving public assistance participate in the food stamp program.

One official in Maryland felt that "Since stamps are a USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture) program, they are responsible for publicity on it." In one New Mexico county, a stamp official indicated there was no general public information program. He relied on case workers, word of mouth, and on community workers who might take the message to friends and neighbors. In fact, he was against a general information program because "a little knowledge is sometimes harmful."

Most states or counties publish little pamphlets describing the food programs. Usually, these are left in welfare offices or in offices where those persons on assistance might be expected to see them -- such as medicaid or medicare offices. These pamphlets are not generally given wide distribution. In one California county, CRASH found 15 welfare recipients in one town who had never heard about the commodity program.

In almost no county where CRASH operated did those officials interviewed consider it part of their job to go out and look for people who might need their services. Realistically, such outreach work would necessitate a vast increase in budget and personnel. However, few officials considered such an expenditure worthwhile.

If attempts to inform people about the food stamp and donated commodities program are minimal, such attempts with relation to free or reduced price lunches are almost non-existent.

Schools which participate in the federal school lunch program are required to provide lunches even for those children who do not or can not pay the full price. There are regulations, now, which detail how such free lunch children shall be treated with respect to their anonymity.

Each school district receiving federal funds for school lunches must have a printed plan and set guidelines for providing free lunches for needy children. In 1/3 of the school districts surveyed by CRASH school personnel said there were no printed plans for the district, and that each school set its own policy. We have no way of knowing whether there in truth are no plans or whether the administrators simply did not want to show them.

In only one instance did CRASH find a principal who actively publicized the existence of free lunches. He sent a letter to all parents, explaining the program and the qualifications for participation, enclosing a form which parents could fill out. In all other instances, principals either relied on their own judgment or that of school nurses or teachers to select those they felt needed a free lunch.

Many times, when school lunch personnel were asked how they publicized the program, they indicated either directly or indirectly that if everyone knew about the free lunches, the demand would be so great they couldn't meet it. In Riverside County, California, most of the people on welfare with whom CRASH workers talked had never heard of the free lunch program.

One southern New Jersey principal said that children of welfare families were not supposed to be getting free lunches. Another official in a New Jersey town said they didn't want to embarrass children, therefore they did not publicize free lunches. He didn't say how the children or their parents found out about them.

Not everyone is convinced that children should get a lunch regardless of ability to pay. One principal felt that children needed to learn that "welfare and school lunches are a privilege". Others, many of them, feel that they can give only those free lunches which are budgeted. For this reason, CRASH often heard references to the quota or schedule of free lunches. So, in one school district in Arizona an estimated 500 children need free lunches but the district budget provides for only 300 free lunches.

2. Language. Language is another great barrier to wider participation in food programs. It is, of course, closely related to general ignorance about the programs. In many parts of this country, people do not speak English. They speak and understand Spanish or an Indian language. Welfare departments seldom print information in any language other than English and even more rarely have staff who can speak or understand other languages. Language is a barrier in California, Arizona, New Mexico, New York and Florida to our certain knowledge. It surely exists in areas where CRASH did not operate. Even in Maine, some people do not speak English, rather they speak French-Canadian.

3. Fear. In Ventura County, California, CRASH was made aware of a problem which, in one form or another, exists in many states. People are afraid to apply for food assistance. Ventura is a largely rural, agricultural county. There are many seasonal workers. More importantly, there are many illegal immigrants who are actively recruited from Mexico to pick crops.

These illegal immigrants receive almost no assistance. The work is seasonal. The immigrants are not citizens and they face the possibility of deportation. Their fear of asking for food from the commodity program in the county is not illusory. They make do on what they can find and what friends can scrape up for them.

In Maryland, some people who were already on welfare said they were afraid if they applied for stamps their children would be taken away from them, or they would lose their house. Again, this fear is not entirely groundless. In Maryland, welfare case workers or public health workers can petition to have children removed from a home if the workers feel the family cannot care for them properly. Asking for food stamps could be so interpreted. At least, some families fear that that is what would happen. And, regarding housing, it is true that if a welfare recipient cannot pay taxes on his property, the Department of Social Services can advance a loan. Should the recipient die without repaying the loan, the DSS gets its money back by selling the property. Thus, in the mind of the welfare recipient, the DSS can take away your home, for reasons that are not entirely clear.

4. Stigma. There is, in this country, a great stigma attached to not earning your own way. In almost every county CRASH surveyed we found people who would rather do without a basic necessity of life -- food -- than "go on welfare". Food programs are generally lumped in with welfare in most people's minds.

Very often, food stamps are sold at the welfare office, where certification also is handled. In a number of counties, people told us they might buy food stamps but they didn't want their friends and neighbors seeing them go to the welfare office. Even though they would be paying for stamps, people who could have used the bonus money didn't participate because they were too proud.

People who use commodities often tell their friends not only about the food they get but the treatment they receive at the hands of the distributors and other officials. Sometimes people "go off" commodities because they feel even the extra food is not worth the humiliation and degradation to which they are subjected.

People will do a great deal to assure that their children, at least, eat well. But again, pride often prevents them from asking for a free lunch for their children. Older children, too, would rather do without lunch if asking for it means other children will scorn their poverty.

In Allegany County, Maryland, it is generally believed and no where publicly contradicted, that a child gets a free lunch if he hasn't got a father. One high school girl believed that that is why you get a free lunch. A fourth grader in Allegany County said, "I take a bag lunch because my mommy says its none of their business whether I have a father or not."

5. Transportation. Riverside County, California is 180 miles wide. The Mojave Desert cuts through the center of the county. There are two places in the county where people can be certified for commodities and can pick up the commodities, one

roughly at either end of the county. A trip to either certification and distribution center could involve a 90 mile journey. Even if people want to get commodities, they must either have transportation or enough money to pay someone to drive them, and also, usually, to pay a babysitter.

CRASH found distances and lack of transportation to be a barrier in many counties. Even in New York City, which operates the commodity program, if people are carrying commodities they find they cannot use buses or subways. They must either get the food home in wagons or shopping carts, or take a taxi. Because of the distance and transportation problems, even commodities are not free.

Even with stamps, distances pose a difficulty. While authorization cards are often mailed to families, they must purchase the stamps in person. In Monterey County, California this could mean a trip of 60 to 70 miles. Again, CRASH found that people ended up paying someone to drive them to the stamp issuance center. Then, of course, stamp users have to get to the stores that accept stamps. Too often, people feel it simply is not worth the trouble and time to buy food stamps.

6. Regulations. Sometimes, seemingly reasonable regulations work a hardship on families, effectively excluding them from participation. For example, the head of the household must sign up for commodities. In McKinley County, New Mexico, at least one family was thereby excluded. This family includes a mother, father and seven children. When CRASH talked to the family, the father was in California working as a farm laborer, following the crops and available jobs. The family was not able to receive commodities because the father, the head of the household, was not there.

One of the basic food stamp regulations requires that a family have adequate cooking facilities in order to participate in the program. This rule almost automatically eliminates vast numbers of migrant workers. These workers live in camps and either have no cooking facilities or must share with other families. Local officials sometimes will not accept assurances that a family will use a neighbor's or relative's kitchen. "Adequate cooking facilities" are not defined, so that this regulation is left open to local interpretation. It is usually rather stringently defined by officials, thereby limiting potential participants in the food program. CRASH also feels it is not unreasonable to expect that some people are too poor to have cooking facilities. So, they are too poor to participate in the food stamp program.

CRASH did not operate in counties which have more specialized restrictions on who can participate in food programs. In the commodity program alone, there are counties which:

- do not serve commodities to both public assistance and non-public assistance families;
- provide commodities to unemployable only -- sick, injured, mentally ill;
- insist that no dogs be in the household;
- exclude, for the sake of the children, a household if one or both parents are "drunks";
- provide commodities on a partial or seasonal basis.

These regulations were taken from a report based on a survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We do not know if the Department approves of these regulations and has let them stand, or if some attempt has been made to change them. Such regulations serve mostly to limit participation in food programs.

Special Barriers

A major problem relating to the school lunch program is that so many schools lack any cafeteria facilities. In one town in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, not one school had a cafeteria.

Many schools in this country were built over fifty years ago. The schools served the immediate neighborhood, which was usually small. Today, schools and neighborhoods are overcrowded, populations have shifted and children do not go home for lunch, either because it is too far, or the mother works, or because there is no food at home.

Some school districts are trying to remedy the problem of lack of cafeteria facilities. Mostly, however, they are waiting until large central schools are built or until districts merge. In the meantime, children at best get a bag lunch, at worst get no lunch. As one woman in Pennsylvania described the situation, she had, "heard about hot lunches once, and there was some talk about free lunches about a year ago. But I haven't heard much lately."

In counties where a food stamp program has replaced a commodity program, participation has dropped markedly. In Sacramento County, California, 45,000 participated in the commodity program each month. Now that the county is on food stamps, 29,000 participate. A major barrier to participation is that people must pay for food stamps. But it is not always the amount to be paid. Rather, the way in which the money must be paid prevents many people from participating.

CRASH teams asked welfare recipients and commodity program participants if they would rather have stamps. While many indicated they would like the choice possible under stamps, and the increase in dignity afforded by being able to go to a regular grocery store, most felt that they just couldn't afford stamps.

The food stamp program is more complex than the commodity program. Food stamps attempt to expand the use of food domestically through the regular channels of the economy. As with commodities, each state determines eligibility. But, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has established a schedule of payments per family. For example, if a four person household earns less than \$20 a month, they can pay \$2.00 and receive \$60 worth of stamps, thereby making \$58 more available for food per month. This scale is keyed to family size and monthly income. There is an adjusted scale for the Southeastern United States.

From many other sources and studies, we know that poor families live from day to day. They are caught in a credit-debt cycle of life, sometimes not ever seeing cash money. Many of the poor have seasonal or sporadic work. Farm laborers get paid by the day. Seasonal labor of any sort, by definition, means that there is no income at all for some part of the year. Yet, with food stamps, a set amount of money must be accumulated for full payment once a month, or at best twice a month.

In addition to irregular income at best, poor families have little or no cushion of savings for emergencies, or even for expected additional expenses such as school clothes in the fall. When an emergency arises

or a bill or debt comes due, the first item cut from the budget is food. Families feel it is better to be sure of a roof overhead and to scrimp a bit on food. This is impossible with food stamps. The entire food budget is already spent if you buy food stamps. So people don't buy stamps, preferring to have that option left open.

Another often-cited reason people don't participate in the food stamp program is that the stamps can be used only for food. They cannot be used for soap, detergents, toilet paper, shoes, school clothes, or other necessary paper products. In order to get at least some of everything, people prefer to hang on to their meager cash and spend it in their own way.

Food stamp officials interviewed by CRASH are aware of and concerned by the low rate of participation among the elderly. Food stamp officials felt that old people do not eat as much as younger people. The elderly often are on a fixed income and may well need assistance. But, they don't need or don't want to spend the amounts determined by the U.S.D.A. on food. Right now, there is no provision for this situation. The scale is determined by family size and income. So, the elderly feel that, for them, the food stamp program is a waste of money because they do not normally spend that much money on food. So, they receive no help with expanding their food dollar.

Summary

The food programs which do exist do not reach all those who need them. They don't reach people because no one is telling people that the programs exist, because people don't speak English and the food programs

seldom speak any other language; because people are afraid to participate in the programs; because people are ashamed to ask for help; because distances are too great and transportation too costly; because the regulations involved in food programs serve to exclude people; and because particular programs have rather particular barriers which prohibit the full use of benefits.

ARE THE PROGRAMS SERVING THOSE THEY DO REACH?

"It seems to me that they make efforts to get us to suffer even before they begin to meet our needs... They tell us, 'We give you food, what more do you want. Stop being choosy'."

Former commodity recipient
McKinley County, New Mexico

Several school principals and other school personnel told CRASH that little kids, in elementary school, will generally tell you if they are hungry, or will not hide their hunger. It was harder to tell with older kids. They won't say, and they hide their hunger when they cannot afford to pay for lunch. They are too proud.

What does it cost a person to participate in federal food programs? What does it cost in terms of money, in terms of time, in terms of lost dignity and humanity?

There are no statistics on this facet of federal food programs. This is "subjective" information, a matter of feelings, of attitudes. CRASH teams were advised to talk to as many people as possible and to observe for themselves how programs operated. We talked with officials, program participants, case workers, cafeteria workers in schools, principals, school nurses, public health nurses, doctors, interested and involved citizens.

Drawing on what CRASH teams learned in terms of attitudes and in terms of how food programs actually operated, we feel we can put together a mythical profile of what a food program participant is expected to be.

First of all, a participant in any food program should have no pride. He must not mind case workers and sometimes the entire community knowing everything there is to know about his family, his economic standing, his medical and personal problems. He must be ready to beggar himself in terms of dignity.

In Maine, he can do this easily by signing a four-page form which ends..."I, hereby, swear the above facts to be true to the best of my ability and know that I am asking for Pauper Supplies and that I am destitute and unable to take care of the necessities of life."

Since officials don't publicize food programs, a potential recipient should have a sixth sense so he can find out what programs are available, what the eligibility standards are, and what all the benefits are. But such knowledge should not be exhibited lest officials take offense that a poor person knows as much or more than they do.

Our mythical participant must certainly speak, read and write English. He must also eat and think in English. That is, he should forget any ethnic background and eating habits. He should also have no special dietary needs -- such as for ulcers, bad stomach or high blood pressure or heart disease. In addition, a food program participant should be an expert dietitian, especially if he is receiving commodities. At the most, he can expect 18 different commodities, mostly starches, which do not lend themselves to variety.

Since most offices involved in food programs are open, at best, only during normal office hours, the participant should not have a job, so that he can adjust his time to the convenience of program officials.

Still, he needs access to a car or truck in order to apply, get certified, buy stamps, spend stamps or pick up commodities. He shouldn't own a car because that may be evidence that he isn't poor enough to participate.

If the participant is in the commodity program, he should have a home big enough to store a month's supply of food. Well, three weeks supply really, since commodities usually run out during the last week. It is also well if the participant has a sound constitution which can withstand fasting every fourth week.

No food program participant should get sick when it is inconvenient for program officials. If he misses a certain number of opportunities to participate in the program, he is dropped from the program and must go through the entire certification procedure again. Sickness, missed rides, confusion of dates, no money for stamps are seldom considered valid excuses.

If the participant is using stamps, he should be a mathematical whiz. The scale of eligibility and the scale for determining how much money you have to pay for stamps is so rigidly administered that if you are 68¢ over the limit for one level, you may end up paying \$10 more for a few more stamps. You also need to calculate, if you can find out what local regulations are, how much can be deducted from gross income to arrive at a net income figure for purposes of finding out in what category in the scale you belong.

Finally, our food program participant should forget about exercising choice. You take what commodities are available. You spend a pre-determined amount of money for food and shop at stores pre-chosen by federal certifiers.

Granted that the above profile is mythical, a generalization based on a compilation of various incidents mentioned to CRASH by program participants. But the incidents occurred as often in Maine as in Georgia, in Oregon as in Arizona, among Indians, Mexican Americans, black people, white people. CRASH found out about such experiences in six weeks in over 30 counties in 15 states. We feel we have just skimmed the surface.

Commodities

The U.S. Department of Agriculture currently offers 22 commodities for the donated food program. Each state orders those commodities it wants, in the amounts it wants. The U.S.D.A. will then transport those commodities to state warehouses. From there on it is a state and local program.

Each state sets eligibility standards. The counties, or in Maine the cities and towns, use those standards to decide who gets commodities. The localities must also be responsible for getting food from the state warehouse to local warehouses and/or distribution centers. The localities are also responsible for the cost of local storage and distribution.

The first problem with the commodity program is to get the county or town to institute it. Other studies and investigations have revealed the reluctance of officials to admit there is poverty in their area. Sometimes there is a genuine disbelief that anyone needs aid.

In a town in Maine, in the Bath-Brunswick area, the local Community Action Program felt a commodity program was needed. They told the managing director of the town, formerly a position designated as the

overseer of the poor, how they felt. He told the CAP people that if they could find 15 people in the town who needed commodities, he would talk with them again. Within three days, the CAP people found 121 people who did indeed need the program.

Again in Maine, in the Augusta-Hallowell area, the town officials did not think they needed a food program. A group of local citizens felt they did need a program. An estimate by the Maine Department of Health and Welfare indicated that 1000 in Augusta alone would be eligible for the commodity program.

Using a grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity, a CAP agency instituted a commodity program. They launched it in three towns in September, 1968. By July, 1969 they were serving 2,900 people in five towns. When the county, Kennebec, finally took over the program, they expanded it to include 25 more towns, but reduced participation by certifying only 1500 in the whole county.

Once a town or county begins the commodity program, the next step for the recipient is certification. Usually this is a simple matter of declaring need. But this is not always all there is to it. From San Juan County, New Mexico we received this report:

In slow, and broken English, a woman...explained that she had been waiting to be certified on and off since her son was a baby. The boy was now 16. And just recently certified, she was still unsure about where and when she would get her food.

And from the Riverside County, California team we learned of a man and wife and their ten children. The man is of an unusual height -- 7'9". He certainly needs specially made clothes and shoes. He used to

work in circuses and carnivals. But now he is ill and will soon die. He, too, has been trying to get certified so that his children, at least, can have food. But, according to regulations, he has no unmet needs.

Between application and certification for commodities, there is usually little delay. Often a person can be certified in less than an hour. Of course, unless he comes at the right time of the month he doesn't usually begin receiving food. If he is one day after the monthly distribution, he just waits a month. But, sometimes the lag between application and certification is longer, as was the case with the woman in San Juan County.

In New York City, certification proceedings take from one to two months, even though certifiers do not make home visits. And in San Juan County, New Mexico, applicants may wait several months or years to become certified.

The situation in San Juan County and other rural areas is caused by the distances involved and the lack of enough people to certify applicants. In San Juan County the field workers certify people at the "trading post". Often they have two days to cover a radius of 30 miles, handling up to 100 people. Their schedule is erratic so that neither they nor the applicants know for sure when they will be at a particular trading post.

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Next comes picking up the commodities, getting them home and using them. Here, the problems are more general, appearing in most areas where CRASH operated.

A major problem, as we have mentioned elsewhere, is transportation. People don't really complain. But CRASH asked how far it was to the distribution center and how people got there. Some CRASH team members worked in distribution centers. All CRASH teams visited the centers.

We have previously mentioned the 180-mile wide Riverside County with its two distribution centers, one at either end of the county. A truck or car is a necessity unless you live in the town where commodities are distributed. In many, possibly most, rural counties, there is no public transportation other than taxi cabs. So, people hitch-hike, form car pools, pay someone to drive them, take cabs or do without. This is the case in McKinley County, Arizona; Bath-Brunswick, Maine; Clayton County, Georgia; San Juan County, New Mexico.

For people living in large metropolitan areas, such as New York City, the problem of transportation has a slightly different face. There are many distribution centers, or depots, throughout the city. New York City has the commodity program. People can take public transportation to the depots, but CRASH found that they were not allowed on buses or subways when they had their commodities, particularly those people who used metal shopping carts to carry their food.

In general, those people interviewed by CRASH made few complaints about the quantities or the sizes of the commodity foods. They said they were not too much trouble to handle and they could store them.

There was, however, much discussion of the kinds of foods available. Among those commodities available are rolled oats and rolled wheat. Not everyone is familiar with preparing these. One or the other may be quite foreign to their diet. While commodity recipients do not have to pick up everything, no substitutes are allowed. They just don't take what they don't want or can't use. Very little allowance for regional preferences is made.

Not all commodities which are available are ordered by the states. Often this is because warehouses are not equipped to handle all kinds of commodities. In Manatee County, Florida, no cheese was ordered because the food would spoil in the warehouses available. In Arizona, lard is available only between September and April because the warehouses and trucks are not refrigerated.

However, CRASH also learned that while cheese and butter in Arizona were not available to welfare recipients, such commodities were indeed ordered by the state and were available to private organizations. CRASH teams in Maricopa County, Arizona were told that the cheese and butter were sold to private groups.

Commodities which are ordered by the state may or may not turn up at the local distribution center. In New York City, at a distribution depot in lower Harlem, people receiving commodities said they hadn't seen flour in about a year, and that lately they hadn't had any cereal or grits. A few said they had never seen any meat at the depot.

Among the commonest complaints were that the chopped meat tasted awful and that the cornmeal often had weevils, a problem caused by "under-degermination" of this commodity. This is particularly true in hot weather.

Before moving on to other problems, we should point out that it is only a decision by the U.S. Department of Agriculture which determines what products are offered as commodities. Nowhere, that we could find, is the program limited to those foods which are in surplus. The Secretary of Agriculture could, technically, use section 32 funds and appropriations to purchase any foods he chose. It is technically possible for preferences to be expressed and met within each state.

Secondly, it has long been known that not everyone can make a balanced, good tasting meal out of commodities. As one official told CRASH, commodities were never meant to provide a complete diet. They were meant to supplement a sub-standard diet. Yet many people do, indeed, exist only on commodities.

The U.S.D.A. and the Extension Service, and often university nutritionists, are trying to provide recipes, menus, and cooking classes for commodity recipients.

In some places, in California and Maine, we did come across people trying to assist commodity recipients in the preparation of food. But, the U.S.D.A. recipes and menus are not always handed out with the food.

There are not enough people around to run cooking classes. And, as in Maine, while excellent programs are running in one area, people 16 miles away are not even aware that the Extension Service exists, much

less that it is running classes. Here, too, language is a difficulty as is ethnic background. CRASH came across some excellent programs, but they were generally geographically limited, understaffed, underfinanced and underpublicized.

Commodities are distributed once a month. Schedules for when and where distributions are made are supposed to be printed, published and widely circulated. This is not always true. And sometimes, the distributors do not keep to the schedule.

In San Juan County, New Mexico, the schedule is not always posted. And if a family misses picking up commodities for three consecutive months, they are automatically dropped from the program. In New York City, each depot is open specified days of the month. A recipient is assigned a specific day to pick up commodities. Yet some recipients in New York reported they knew depots which were open every other day, all through the month.

In Kennebec County, Maine, officials have attempted to decentralize the distribution by operating out of buses in some areas. However, they have found that, should a particular area have more people than estimated showing up for commodities, the bus must return to the warehouse to pick up more goods. This throws the schedule off. People in the county are never really sure when to show up. The distribution crew drives a circuit.

Finally, CRASH found the following problem to be generally widespread. If, when a person gets his turn to be served at the distribution center, a particular commodity is out of stock, the recipient has only a few choices. First, he can just take what there is and go home.

Second, he might decide to take nothing and come back the next day, if he isn't assigned a special time or day. Third, he could, if in an area where there is more than one distribution center, take a chance by going to the other place. Or, he can try to get his commodities and come back later to see if the missing commodity has come in. Generally, the commodity recipient doesn't push his luck, takes what there is and does without the rest.

There are no substitutions allowed in commodities. And no supplementing in case food runs out before the end of the month. A very small percent of recipients said the food lasted all month. Again, this is probably because officials operate on the erroneous belief that commodities are supplementing something. According to the Riverside County, California team, the maximum amount of food there is geared to a family of five.

Food Stamps

Most food stamp participants believe they are paying too much for stamps. Most stamp participants and officials believe that the lump sum, all or nothing, requirement should be done away with.

Those counties which operate the food stamp program on a monthly basis require, as set down in the U.S.D.A. schedule, that participants plunk down the entire amount for a month's food. For example, if a four person household has an income of \$35 a month, the total amount paid is \$10 each month, for a total of \$62 worth of food stamps.

That may sound like a good deal. But out of that \$35 a month, rent, clothing, bills, etc. must be paid. If \$10 is automatically gone, that leaves \$25 for other basic living expenses.

We have already mentioned the situations in which a poor family most likely doesn't receive a monthly income. They either get paid by the day or most often by the week. Usually, only those on public assistance receive a monthly check.

The food stamp plan is confusing to many people. They compare what they pay and how much they receive with neighbors and can't understand all the differences. Often they can only assume it is discrimination, or that somehow they have done something wrong and are being penalized. Part of this confusion lies with the basic schedule.

One would assume that a family of four, whatever its income, and given the general disregard for the ages of those four, might have the same nutritional needs as any other family of four. Yet, the U.S.D.A. schedule indicates that a family of four, depending on income, can get anywhere from a total of \$60 to \$108 worth of food stamps monthly. Unless the U.S.D.A. has some hidden factor, the only variable we can see is income. Yet if one four-person household includes two adults and two children, you would think their ability to pay would be greater and their needs less than one adult and three children. As far as we can determine, no such factors enter into the schedule.

Another reason for the variations in apparently similar cases is the deductions allowed from gross incomes. Deductions may or may not include rent, mortgages, transportation costs related to job, medical bills, etc. These vary from state to state. A person is allowed so much net income, and so much in liquid assets -- such as savings.

As was the case with commodities, so many things are not understood by participants, and are not explained, that it is remarkable that so many are participating. Even within a county, there is variation between what the stamp participant understands, what the case workers understand and what the administrators understand are the workings of the program. And all three points of view may differ from the official county and state plans.

In Pennsylvania, the official pamphlet on food stamps says that certain documents, such as pay stubs, rent receipts, savings account book, etc. must be presented when applying for food stamps. Yet in Delaware County, officials say that affidavits are used almost exclusively. There is also some confusion among officials, and between officials and participants, as to whether rent is taken into account when determining eligibility. The pamphlet says to bring rent receipts. Yet people in Philadelphia report that when they applied, no one asked them about any deductions, including rent.

The CRASH team in Warren County, North Carolina reported: "Many... who are eligible do not apply because of... misconceptions... such as the fallacy that you have to sign over your property if you want stamps, or that stamps are not for people who have jobs... Many who do get stamps are not aware that they could cost less through deductions. We have learned also that transactions can be done by proxy..."

A team new to a county found out the above in less than two months. The officials responsible for administering the program have been in Warren County much longer. We wonder why no effort seems to have been made to correct false impressions and spread information as to the true

nature of the program. Also, is it just that participants are not aware that expenses are being deducted from their gross income, or is it that their eligibility is being determined on the basis of gross income, rather than net income? We don't know, we just wonder?

Greene County, North Carolina seems indicative of attitudes among many food stamp participants, and also among welfare recipients. CRASH workers reported "They are asked for information and given a result -- a welfare check or authorization to buy stamps -- with only a vague idea, if any, of how the input produced certain results. There is no understanding of the food stamp philosophy. They were once given food free. Now they have to pay for stamps. Why? Some people pay more for stamps than others. Why? They must pay more for stamps at some times than at others. Why? 'If I could get \$60 together I could go buy groceries. Why should I spend it on stamps?' "

In very few instances did CRASH find officials and workers who took the time or thought it part of their job to explain the program to the recipients. People are simply told to bring in this or that, then they are told how much to pay for stamps. People don't know why they have to bring in rent receipts, or medical bills, or other such documents. Even worse, people don't know that they should present these proofs so that their payments could be lowered.

Being certified eligible for food stamps is obviously more difficult than it is for commodities. Essentially, you do need an income for food stamps. Most Americans do not live from day to day. Getting together \$2 for a month is no hardship for most Americans. In fact, that's almost pocket money.

But many people are day laborers, or farm workers whose income is seasonal but whose debts and expenses are year long. Migratory workers often begin by owing their crew leader transportation money, and spend the rest of the season working to pay off their transportation and housing debts. When winter comes, they are further behind than when they started.

CRASH came across some special problems with regard to food stamps. For example, in Greene County, North Carolina, the certification office usually asks a landlord or employer what a family's income is. We found that the employer or landlord (often the same person) would:

1. not deduct such things as operating farm expenses, taxes, etc.
2. count money loaned the family as income, even though the loan had to be repaid.
3. overestimate the amount that the family would be paid for the next three months -- the extent of certification.

In addition, everyone is cut off food stamps in Greene County on July 1 on the assumption that they will be earning money in the fields.

Another central problem with stamps is that the schedules do not take into account the ages of family members, nor the special needs of the elderly. Young children need more food than adults. Elderly people don't need as much food as other age groups. In interviews with many elderly people, CRASH was continually told they felt they didn't need all that food and that they would rather buy their own food and have the money for other things, like doctor bills.

The time between application and certification for food stamps seems to present more problems than the procedure for commodities. More time is involved. In Los Angeles, various officials estimated that it might take from three to six weeks, or from eight to twelve weeks to be certified. In Bernalillo County, New Mexico, certification can take anywhere from one to three months. In other counties, certification procedure takes less than a week.

In most instances, there are no emergency funds or emergency foods for people who are waiting to be certified. They may be referred to a private agency, or given a temporary voucher. We know of no county which provides aid for any extended time if people are waiting to be certified.

Usually, people are re-certified, that is re-checked at regular intervals. People remain on stamps while this procedure is going on. If they are decertified, they either have to re-apply or do without. Most decertifications are related to changes in income. But again, if a person has seasonal work, his income will disqualify him for stamps for a certain number of months. When that season is over, he must re-apply, and simply wait before again receiving stamps. CRASH never could find out what people did in the meantime, other than simply the best they could with no income.

Statistics indicate that most counties participating in the food stamp program now use a bi-monthly purchase system. This is not entirely what CRASH found. Many counties offer the bi-monthly option only to those stamp participants who do not receive public assistance. In other counties, the bi-monthly purchase option is special and has to be requested. One official in North Carolina reported that no one ever asked to receive the stamps bi-monthly.

The monthly or even bi-monthly purchase requirement is strictly up to the states or the counties. In Minnesota, the state regulations stipulate that stamps be sold regularly. CRASH found that in St. Louis County, stamps can be purchased monthly, bi-monthly or weekly.

The two most common places selling stamps are the welfare office or banks. It is not legally required that these be the only places stamps are sold. Among the problems involved with both these institutions is that they are open only during normal working hours, or banking hours. This may seem in line with the general belief that all people on any form of public assistance do not work. Such is not really the case.

The "working hours only" situation works a great hardship on those stamp recipients who do work. Their lunch hour is also the regular business lunch hour. Sometimes, people must lose money by taking off from work to go down and purchase stamps, or to get certified. If a person works the "graveyard shift", in a factory for instance, the hours are in total conflict, unless the person doesn't sleep.

CRASH found similar conditions with regard to the commodities program. In both instances, some basic assumptions are made about the people participating, and conditions are created accordingly. Most officials of agencies do not adjust themselves to the convenience of their clients.

In the certification office in one county in New Jersey, we found that there were no bathrooms, even though people had to wait a long time and often had to bring their children with them because they

couldn't afford a baby sitter. In some counties, the stamp office stops selling stamps at 2:30 so that the money can be taken to the bank before it closes.

Some counties do let other agencies sell stamps. In Ramsey County, Minnesota, the local Community Action Program began selling stamps. They became actively involved when they learned of a particular situation. One day, there was a particularly long line at the stamp office. When closing time came, the workers simply closed the doors. Now the citizens group has an account in a bank in each area where it sells stamps. They can deposit only, and the Department of Welfare withdraws the money. In addition, the banks get to use the money for a full month.

The Ramsey County experience indicates what can be done. Most counties seem to prefer either banks or the welfare department. Banks were considered a good agent for selling stamps because they are generally safe, and banks are located all over. But, banks are not always eager to offer this service. For one thing, the banks are not reimbursed enough money to even meet the expenses involved -- staff salary, time, time spent in filing reports. In addition, banks which sell stamps do not get to use the money. That is, the money from the sale of food stamps is not left in the bank for a long enough time. The money is sent to the nearest federal reserve bank, along with reports, etc.

In one New Jersey County, banks practically had to be coerced into selling stamps. In some towns in that County, no banks will handle

stamps. In other counties, banks sell stamps only on certain days, often not on Friday so that they can catch up on the paper work involved.

Talking to the bank personnel in that New Jersey county, CRASH learned that in at least one bank, the report necessary to fulfill requirements takes about two hours. This is sent to the state capital four days after the 20th of each month. In one bank which handles about \$500 a day or more in stamp business, the whole amount is sent in to the federal system each day.

From one of the banks which refused to issue stamps, CRASH heard this: "Anyone willing to work can support himself. There should be no such thing as cash welfare... Half the people that are now issued food stamps would be passing bad checks."

On the whole, few people complained about service at banks. This, in part, might be attributed to the general attitude of not rocking the boat, and not expecting too much to begin with. It also may indicate that those banks which do handle stamps do so from a genuine attitude of public service.

Just as there are misconceptions about the general stamp program, so too is there misinformation about how to use the stamps. Some people believe that you must use the stamps only in the county where they were issued. This is not true. Stamps must be purchased, and purchased regularly, within the county where you live. But the actual coupons are good at any certified food store.

The necessity to constantly use the stamps, once eligible, does not always make sense. The same is true of commodities. You must participate consistently and not miss an opportunity to do so more than

twice in succession, or three times in six issuing periods. The option of sporadic discontinuance of stamps or commodities lies solely with the official agencies.

It seems to CRASH that the reasons people miss a food stamp purchase should be taken into account. Somehow, it doesn't make sense to stop helping a person because he couldn't afford it one month. Even some stamp officials have suggested that the only way to "make it" on food stamps is for people to skip buying one month so they could catch up on all their other bills and needs. Also, some people need stamps only when a particular emergency arises. Should they be held to the same stringently enforced regulations as everyone else? Some counties do have a special category for emergency or temporary eligibility. Most do not.

Stamps can be spent only in those stores certified by the U.S.D.A. However, the effort that goes into recruiting stores into the program is much greater than that spent getting people on the programs. Those store certifiers with whom CRASH talked outlined a most extensive recruiting effort.

First, letters explaining the program are sent to all grocery stores in the county. Meetings are set up with area grocers to go over the program again in detail. In one instance, the stores which were not at the meetings were sent another letter.

There are courses set up to insure that the store owners and/or managers and personnel understand the procedures involved. The stores like the stamp program. When they are certified, it means that they

will get more customers, do more business. In addition, if the area is small or rural and there aren't many stores, they have what amounts to a guaranteed income.

We asked if a store could be decertified. Generally, we were told that that could happen if the store bought stamps for money at a discount price; sold liquor, cigarettes, paper products or imported items for stamps; didn't understand the correct procedures. Such stores usually were first investigated, then warned, then possibly suspended. We rarely heard of a store becoming decertified. In addition, most complaints were brought by competing businesses.

CRASH wondered if a store could be decertified because it raised prices around the time stamps were issued, or sold bad food. In Philadelphia, one store which had notoriously bad quality food was being expanded and still had its stamp certification.

We rarely heard of stores selling imported foods, which is prohibited by law. However, there are reports that some stores will pay cash for stamps, at a discount. In Philadelphia, we heard reports that some stores require that stamp users pay no more than half their bill with stamps. They demanded cash for the rest.

A particularly persistent and wide spread problem seems to be the change system. Food stamp coupons are worth 50¢ and \$2. The regulations say that if the bill doesn't come out even, credit slips can be given, or the difference could be made up in cash. Stores sometimes ask people to either put something back or take something extra to make it come out even.

Stores also make sure that their credit slips are good only for that store. This restricts a person's choice even more.

When paying for groceries, the clerks must separate those items purchasable by stamps, and those covered by cash only. As with so much else, not all these procedures and regulations are explained to the stamp participants. Often, when someone using stamps does not show the stamps before the tally is made, the clerk must separate the items and ring up a new bill. Many stamp users are convinced that the clerks are raising the prices. Probably this is not true in most cases. But the separation and the procedures which the clerks must follow have rarely been discussed with stamp users.

Although often between 70 and 90 percent of the stores in a food stamp county are certified to accept stamps, this selection process does create problems. Stores are not usually chosen on the basis of where they are located. But some stamp users feel that some stores are not certified because "they", whoever "they" are, don't want welfare people in their neighborhood. Others feel that they are forced into using small neighborhood stores, where prices are invariably higher, often because of overhead or other valid business reasons. Neither situation may be true, but this is what stamp users believe.

One final word about a situation which typifies the extent of misinformation, non-information and general mistrust which seems to surround the food stamp program. The U.S.D.A. initiated a special "bonus-bonus" program. In counties where a stamp program had just begun, all new participants for that first year were offered stamps for half-price

for their first month of participation. The next month, of course, the price doubled, that is it leveled off to the normal price. A kind of special introductory offer.

Evidently, this whole effort was never sufficiently explained. In almost every food stamp county, people were shocked when it came time to buy their second month's stamps. They couldn't understand why the price had doubled. Many dropped out because they felt they could no longer afford the cost.

Both officials and program participants have suggested that the "bonus-bonus" was not a bad idea. It just wasn't explained. In fact, they have suggested that a similar offer be made during periods when most families have special needs for cash money -- during the winter when heat bills are urgent, just before school opens so clothes can be bought. They also suggest that the half-price be offered to every new participant, and not be discontinued after the program has existed in a county for more than a year.

School Lunch

We have already reported on the fact that not anywhere near all children in school receive lunch, and that those eligible for free lunches often never hear of the program. CRASH also found that many who are receiving "free" lunches are working for them. Very rarely is that a stated requirement. But quite often it is suggested. Kids get the point rather quickly. Although work is optional, school personnel could not think of anyone getting a free lunch who wasn't working. Sometimes, parents also worked.

The other basic problem with school lunches, as they operate, is that there is still discrimination. That is, those getting free lunches are usually easily identifiable -- sometimes still using a separate line, or different color tickets, or having to identify themselves to the cashier.

It is not impossible to keep track of free and reduced price lunches and still maintain the anonymity of those getting lunch free. Some schools simply use the same tickets for all students, and the teachers keep track of who has paid and who has not. It was suggested in one area that parents could send in the money and thereby eliminate the middle man while keeping entirely confidential who was not paying.

The "quota" of free lunches per school, the token work, the methods of operating the program so that free lunch children are readily identifiable, the failure to publicize the program are all completely unnecessary. Every child should be able to get a hot lunch whether or not he can pay for it. We can do no more in this report than add additional school districts to those already mentioned in the report Their Daily Bread. CRASH is already cooperating with other agencies engaged in assuring all children a school lunch, and is sharing with local communities our local findings and recommendations.

SPECIAL GROUP PROBLEMS

In the course of the summer, CRASH found many problems common to people participating in food programs across the country. Rural areas shared common problems whether they were in Maine, New Jersey, North Carolina or California. Large urban areas shared the over-all complexity of the modern megalopolis.

However, we also came across groups of people who, in addition to those common problems, also had very special difficulties. There is little enough consideration of individual differences within the general population which participates in food programs. We have already mentioned the difficulties faced by elderly people. We feel that at least two other groups deserve special mention.

Seasonal and Migratory Workers

Seasonal laborers can be found anywhere the local economy is largely agricultural or related to the tourist industry. Migrant workers follow the "streams", following crops as they mature or going from one area to the next as work becomes available.

There are three main streams in the United States -- one along the east coast beginning in Florida and sweeping through North Carolina, New Jersey and New York and into the midwest; another originating in Texas and sweeping through the midwest and into California; and finally, that originating in southern California and Arizona and flowing up the west coast.

CRASH encountered the problems of this special group in New Jersey, Maryland, California, New Mexico, Arizona and North Carolina. Our contact was not intensive. However, the American Friends Service Committee has had an active involvement with this particular segment of the population for a number of years.

Seasonal workers' primary problem is that they are seasonal. Their income is seasonal. If they are not in a migrant stream, they depend on the too short seasons when local crops are ready for their main source of income. Many are part-time tenant farmers, or sharecroppers. When they are working, their income for those months indicate that they are not eligible for food programs. Within a few months, they have no income.

Because of this sort of existence, seasonal workers are almost always in debt, and most of their earnings go to pay off that debt. For all practical purposes, they do not live on a money economy, but rather one of paper credit and paper debt. And they are frequently taken advantage of, not knowing how much they really owe or how much they have paid.

Migrant farm workers share the problems of all seasonal workers. But they are also highly mobile. For example, many East Coast migrants "live" in Florida. During the winter months, they could qualify for and participate in food programs run in Florida. Once they begin following the crops, they can no longer participate -- they can't rush back from North Carolina to pick up one month's commodities. And they aren't in North Carolina long enough to qualify for that state's programs, or to wait out the time for applications to be processed.

Even if North Carolina, for example, offered emergency food stamps for migrant farm workers, the regulations requiring cooking facilities would have to be suspended as many of the farm workers live in camps where there is a central dining hall or shared cooking facilities.

While it is true that once stamps are purchased they are good in any certified food store, they can be purchased only in the county which authorizes the person as an eligible participant. Again, can a household head go from New Jersey to Florida to purchase one month's stamps? The transportation costs alone would probably absorb the money needed for the stamps.

Transportation is usually provided by the crew leader. The workers are transported by bus or truck, in groups. Even if the migrant workers had stamps, they would not have the transportation to get to the store.

The problems of seasonal and migrant farm workers deserve the special efforts of all levels of government to insure that they can at least partake of the abundance they are in large part responsible for harvesting.

American Indians

CRASH teams in Arizona and New Mexico discovered much about the special problems of Indians living in those areas. The teams themselves were in part composed of American Indians. As with migrant workers, the American Friends Service Committee has had extensive involvement with American Indians.

Drawing on other AFSC as well as CRASH experiences, we feel that American Indians face particularly difficult situations with regard to food programs. They have language problems, Often are seasonal or migrant laborers, and have some of the most complex legal problems with regard to ownership of land and income of any group in the country. Often they are covered by entirely different laws, regulations and programs.

For example, in trying to survey the school lunch program in Apache County, Arizona, one of the problems encountered was that many schools did not receive funds from the national school lunch program. Rather, they received funds from the Johnson-O'Malley Act, a federal statute which provides for federal contributions to facilities which educate Indians. The people in Apache County are still investigating the relationship of those funds to the school lunch program, and trying to see whether the guidelines are the same for both, or should be.

As an indication of what the majority of Indians on reservations must face, we will go into some detail in reporting the situation in Sandoval County, New Mexico. While the particulars of the situation may relate only to the southwest, we feel that all "reservation Indians" face a similar maze of problems and vicious circles. CRASH hopes that others take the time to find out if this assumption is true.

Sandoval County is among the five poorest counties in the United States. Its population is a mixture of Spanish-American, Pueblo Indians, Navajo Indians and anglos (whites). All county offices, including the offices of the New Mexico Department of Health and Social Services which operates the food stamp program, are located in Bernallilo.

This town, the county seat, is 90 miles from the town of Torreon and 98 miles from Counselors.

Navajos who live in Torreon or Counselors must travel dirt roads which are primitive at best to get to the main buildings in their own community. Sixty percent of the Navajo adult population does not speak or read English. They travel by horse and wagon or pickup truck. There is no electricity in Navajo homes, and no running water. The nearest U.S. Post Office is 27 miles from Torreon. There are no phones in the community.

Since the nearest competing private stores or institutions for mail, loans, etc. are 27 miles from Torreon and 35 miles from Counselors, the trading posts have taken over those functions. The trader handles sales on credit, small loans through the institution of pawning, the mail, the telephone concession, purchaser of rugs and livestock, and employment agency for the railroad or seasonal work.

The trader has absorbed government welfare efforts for the Navajos at their point of implementation. The CRASH team in Sandoval felt that case workers of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the state welfare departments see the trader as an ally, an anglo of similar class who can help them obtain the private details of their clients' lives.

The food stamp program replaced the commodity program in Sandoval in 1967. A survey in 1968 indicated that the number of families enrolled in food stamps was greater than that involved in the commodity program. The CRASH team there listed the following reasons for that increase:

1. The commodities had been hard or impossible for many to transport from the distribution points at the Torreon and Counselors Trading Posts.
2. Food stamps afforded an opportunity to make small purchases of vegetables and refrigerated products during the summer months.
3. Many items distributed as commodities, such as peanut butter and non-fat powdered milk, were not part of the Navajo diet.
4. The traders recognized the clear advantages in the increased purchases by their regular customers, as the trading post was the only certified store in the Navajo community.

The large monthly cash outlays required by the food stamp program pose an especially hard burden on Navajos, who are generally outside a cash economy. There have been reports that the traders loan Navajos money with which to buy stamps. It has also been reported that the interest rates sometimes range up to 50 percent and that loans are repaid with food stamps.

The team in Sandoval reported the way the food stamp program operates at one center. At the Counselors Trading Post, the local people go to a metal shed beside the main building for their food stamps. In one room certification takes place. Although the county department says they have a Navajo interpreter, he is rarely present. So, the interview is conducted through any Navajo present who says he can speak English sufficiently to interpret. This results in a very muddled procedure in which an applicant may or may not be certified at the correct income level or family size. In addition, the client's personal life becomes a subject of community gossip quite easily.

In the distribution room at Counselors, the trader or his employee sits beside the case workers. Navajos who have first gone to the trading post to receive a loan in order to purchase stamps now return with a slip to indicate that the loan has been approved. The Navajo hands the trader or his employee the slip. The trader hands the Navajo the cash. The Navajo hands the case worker the cash. The case worker turns over the stamps. The next step is spending the stamps, at the trading post.

This situation, and the charges of usurious interest rates and those of intimidation with regard to where the welfare checks and stamps are spent, have been reported to authorities from the local level, on up to the Governor. Local Navajo groups are continuing their efforts to have the entire system investigated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

"Change? Change? Where do I go?"

Navajo woman from San Juan
County, New Mexico

It is obvious to us in the CRASH program that drastic changes are needed in all federal food programs if the needs of people are to be met at anything approaching an adequate level.

From the official figures we were able to obtain, it is clear that not everyone who qualifies for federal food programs is participating in them. From our experience this summer we learned that the non-participation is due in large part to the failure of all levels of government to make the existence of such programs known; the failure of all levels of government to make the programs available to all people; and the non-human attitudes underlying the administration of almost all food programs.

In all but rare instances, our survey indicated that program administrators were more concerned with processes, with bureaucratic procedures and with cutting budgets than they were with assuring that people got enough food. As the team in Maricopa County, Arizona pointed out, "...Efficiency is too often the goal (of officials)... sacrificing the human values."

From our experience, it does appear that too few people involved in administering food programs are trying to feed people who need food, or are even minimally aware of what common humanity entails.

Often, in interviewing people who should be participating in food programs but who are not, our teams heard stories of insults, of deliberate inconvenience and inconsideration. People said: "...My friend told me how they treated her and I'm not that hungry that I have to put up with that... How hungry do you have to get before you sacrifice your dignity, pride and humanity?" Too many people have to face that question too many times.

Many of our recommendations should have occurred to anyone who had as his prime interest getting food to people who need it. Others have made similar recommendations. We are not basing our recommendations either on other studies or on such considerations as money or bureaucratic efficiency.

We believe that no nation as rich in material wealth as this has the right to allow people to go hungry, or to be malnourished, or to have to divest themselves of all pride and dignity in order to get food. What we recommend is what we feel is necessary in order that people both retain their dignity and survive as healthy human beings.

General Recommendations

I. This country must institute a guaranteed adequate income, preferably before fiscal year 1971. We use the phrase "adequate" advisedly. While recent indications that this country is at last moving toward some sort of income support program are commendable and long overdue, we are dismayed at the level of support being discussed

It has been estimated that a family of four requires an annual income of \$9000 in order to exist at a minimal level in New York City. Even if a family lives in a rural area, it is ludicrous to believe they can exist in health and dignity at \$1600 a year.

Some other figures we have heard discussed are \$4000 a year per adult, plus \$1500 a year per child. This is a general figure. We believe that rigidity has no place in any program dealing with people. This country can surely afford to make good its guarantee of life and its principles of human dignity for all men.

However, as long as the present programs exist, and until such time as a guaranteed adequate income is a fact for all Americans, we recommend the following changes in the food programs.

II. All levels of government should make every effort to let people know what services exist and are available to them. This means they should launch extensive public education programs which will reach all the people.

If current methods are not succeeding, and our study indicates that they are not, then new approaches should be tried. Literature should be printed in clear, understandable language. Information should be printed in many languages. Ethnic and racial radio stations and programs should be utilized. Information should be distributed where the people who need it are most likely to find it -- in their neighborhoods, in the stores and businesses they frequent, in their places of recreation.

Just as important as printed and broadcast information is the existence of people who consider it part of their job to "drum up" business for all food programs. There is a wide-spread need for more community workers and more out-reach programs and staff.

III. Stamps and commodities must be allowed to operate simultaneously in the same county.

IV. More money, at all levels of government, must be appropriated for existing food programs. At present, the burden seems to be resting with local government and federal revenues. With the institution of the new federalism, states will have more monies available. Even now, states should be contributing more in the way of money and personnel to the welfare of their citizenry.

V. We recommend that advisory boards which will have a say in policy determination be established at the federal, state and local levels for all food programs. Further, we recommend that these boards include "recipients", those who participate in food programs.

VI. We recommend that the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other agencies administering food programs establish a system of consistent and vigorous monitoring of all federal food programs.

There should not have had to be a CRASH program. The federal government has consistently relied on good faith in operating programs. Just as consistently, programs have been operated according to the self-interest, biases and personal prerogatives of those most directly in charge.

The monitoring system proposed should have the power to make changes at the state or local level which are needed to insure that the programs do indeed reach and serve the poor.

We urge the states, too, to establish similar systems of monitoring food programs.

VII. We recommend that the federal government and the states and localities cooperate in increasing the number of nutritionists, out-reach workers, case workers and official monitors of food programs. We see no reason why welfare recipients and those who participate in food programs could not be hired for much of the out-reach work needed.

VIII. We recommend that the Secretaries of Agriculture, of Health, Education and Welfare, and the director of the Office of Economic Opportunity issue a memorandum to all personnel of all food programs at all levels making it eminently clear that the food programs they administer are intended to reach all those who need them. Such a memorandum should also state that the needs of the clientele served by the staff are to be kept foremost in all actions, and that neither bureaucracy nor personal bias should interfere with meeting those needs.

It is deplorable that so many local administrators of food programs felt they should not "recruit" participation in their programs. Too often they felt it would be detrimental to the program to publicize it.

Recommendations re Commodities

To the federal government.

1. The Secretary of Agriculture, or whoever administers the commodity program in the future, should direct that each state conduct a full survey to determine the regional and ethnic food preferences which exist. The states should then report those preferences to the Secretary. The Department can devise a system for meeting nutritional needs and local preferences.

The Secretary should then purchase and make available to the states those foods necessary for an adequate diet, those foods preferred and more familiar to people, and all foods in a quantity to meet the needs of the people.

To our knowledge there are no laws which restrict the commodity program to only "surplus" foods. In any event, it is within the Secretary's power to declare foods surplus.

2. The regulations which allow no substitutions of commodities should be altered. As they stand now, these rules encourage waste or continued hunger.

If foods offered are at least partly determined by the people who receive them, wastage should be no problem. And people should have the option of getting more grits if they prefer not to take rolled oats, or if rolled oats are not available.

3. The quantities per family which are determined by the U.S.D.A. should be set at the maximum needed for a nourishing total diet. In determining the quantity schedule, the U.S.D.A. should consider that each family participating in the commodity program may rely on that as their sole source of food. This maximum should not be mandatory but should be available.
4. It should be made explicit that no one on public assistance is automatically excluded from any food program.
5. The Secretary of Agriculture must assure that more meats are offered to people.
6. The commodity program should provide foods to meet special needs. The program should offer baby food and foods for the needs of special groups such as the elderly or those with particular dietary needs -- for example, diabetics.
7. Money should be made available, through what ever agency or funding source most appropriate, to states so that they can provide more adequate storage facilities and distribution centers.
8. The Department of Transportation should consider ways to improve the public transportation, which is now almost non-existent, in rural counties.

Since this may take time, we would recommend that some kind of voucher system be devised so that people who must travel inconvenient distances in order to apply for, be certified for and participate in a food program need not spend additional funds on transportation.

The vouchers might be used for buses, subways, taxis or private cars and would be redeemable at the food program or welfare or other offices of the local or state or federal government.

9. Extension services must be expanded. More nutritionists, more dietitians, and more teachers and people who can make home visits are needed everywhere.

To the states.

1. Every state should order all the food it needs -- both in terms of quantity and in terms of food groupings and preferences -- to feed all the state's citizens who are unable to provide for themselves.

2. Each state should appropriate sufficient funds to assure that there are enough warehouses and storage facilities to handle all the food necessary. These places should be fully adequate to safely store all commodities all year.

3. The states should instruct all state personnel involved in food programs that every effort at fully informing and reaching all those who need these programs be made.

4. The states should encourage and hire more nutritionists and more personnel who can teach nutrition and cooking.

In some areas, professional nutritionists are training housewives who will then run classes in their own communities. The most successful of these programs involved training people participating in food programs who could then work, either in classes or individual homes, within the normal meal patterns of families using commodities.

To localities.

1. Every administrator and case worker involved in the program should widely publicize the commodity program. Case workers should be encouraged to fully inform their clients of the operation of the program and to seek out all those who may need the program.

2. If there are various ethnic groups in the area, and sizable portions of the population speak a language other than English, bi-lingual staff should be used extensively. All literature, signs and communications with participants should be in both English and the participants' own language.

3. Distribution centers should be located in areas convenient to people who pick up commodities. The hours during which centers are open should be convenient for the people served. If people must pick up commodities according to a schedule, the schedule should be made in consultation with the recipient.

If buildings are unavailable for distribution, mobile units, buses or trucks might be used. A delivery system should be instituted for those who cannot conveniently come to the distribution area, either because of age, sickness, small children, or lack of transportation.

4. Localities should have at least one, and possibly more distribution centers where people can pick up food immediately in case of emergencies. People who become eligible for commodities should also be able to pick up food immediately, not be made to wait until the next "regular" distribution date.

5. Localities should consider distributing commodities bi-monthly or even weekly.
6. If a distribution center in another county is more convenient to a portion of the population, mutual agreements might be made so that the convenience of the participant is taken into consideration. This particularly applies to large rural counties. It might even be suggested that all distribution areas be set up along the lines of geography and population, rather than political subdivisions.
7. Counties should make extensive use of extension agents and public health agencies, in programs of education for the general public. There should be cooking and nutrition classes available. Closer cooperation between county government agencies and private organizations and groups would further improve service and citizen involvement in programs.
8. Citizen advisory groups, including representation of commodity recipients, should be formed.
9. Clearly and simply formulated appeals procedures must be established and widely publicized. No one should be dropped arbitrarily from the program. Anyone refused eligibility or decertified should be able to appeal that decision. No one should be cut off the program while the appeal process is going on.
10. At every point in the program, efforts should be made to hire commodity recipients. This should never be done as a condition of eligibility. Rather it would offer employment, however limited, and involvement in the operation of the program. Recipients

could certainly stock and deliver commodities, as well as work as community aides authorized to certify people they find to be in need.

Recommendations re Food Stamps

To the federal government.

1. More counties must be included in the stamp program and these must be adequately funded.
2. The rate of purchase schedule must be revised drastically. It should take into account the ages of family members.

And it should be computed on the assumption that the food purchased with stamps constitutes the entire diet of a family.

3. There should be more allowance made for deductions from gross income. The 30% housing allowance should be revised. The general population is expected to pay 25% of their income for housing. This is supposed to represent one week's income. Perhaps anything over one week's income which is paid for housing should be deducted from the gross income.

4. No one should be required to purchase stamps every single month. Nor should people arbitrarily be de-certified if they miss a certain number of purchase periods. People should be able to purchase stamps when they need them -- when an emergency arises, during a strike or sudden unemployment, prolonged illness of the main wage earner, during seasonal unemployment or layoffs.

5. More free food stamps must be made available.
6. People should be allowed to buy what they think they can afford. There should be no minimum purchase requirements.

Some officials have suggested a system whereby if a family is spending \$75 to purchase \$100 worth of stamps, and if that family feels it can only afford \$30 during a particular period, they should be allowed to pay the \$30 and receive \$40 worth of stamps. That is, they get 25% in bonus stamps for whatever amount they pay.

7. It should be made explicit that no one who receives public assistance can be automatically excluded from the program.
8. Some special provisions for seasonal and migrant workers must be made so that they can purchase and use stamps anywhere, or else that they receive free food stamps.
9. People should be allowed to purchase paper necessities and soap products with stamps.
10. Eligibility and continued certification of stores should depend heavily on the location (in terms of convenience), pricing practices, food quality and overall treatment of food stamp customers.

To the states.

1. Encourage, and in no way inhibit, institutions other than banks to sell food stamps. There are many pilot efforts along these lines which can be studied.

2. Allow self-certification with spot checks.
3. No state should allow welfare or public assistance allowances to be cut because a stamp program is operating.
4. No state should provide eligibility standards which are more stringent than those designated by the federal government, nor than those used to determine eligibility for general welfare.

To localities.

1. Certification and purchase locations should be more convenient to program participants. Stamps can be sold in public housing projects, from store-front centers, from mobile units.

Hours during which certification is accomplished and during which stamps are sold should be convenient to the people served.

2. People should be able to purchase stamps with cash, postal orders or welfare checks. Stamps should also be purchasable by mail. People on public assistance should have the option but not the requirement of having an automatic deduction made from their checks.
3. People participating in the food stamp program should be hired as community aides, operating out-reach programs, certifying people and selling stamps.

4. All personnel in the stamp program should make every effort to inform the general public of the program. They should also fully explain the program to those who apply. Bilingual staff should be hired and used extensively. Signs, leaflets and communications with participants should be printed in both English and the participant's language.

5. A citizen advisory board should be established and should include participants in the stamp program.

6. A clear and simple appeal procedure should be established and widely publicized. No one should be dropped arbitrarily from the program. Anyone refused eligibility or decertified should be able to appeal that decision. No one should be cut off the program while the appeal procedure is going on.

Recommendations re School Lunch

To the federal government.

1. Much more money must be appropriated.
2. States should be assisted in every way in assuring that every school either has a cafeteria or has access to hot lunches.
3. The guidelines on non-discrimination in the free and reduced price lunch program must be vigorously enforced.
4. It should be made clear that a child can receive a free lunch at any time during the school year.

To the states.

1. Every state should appropriate funds for the operation of the school lunch program. They should not rely predominantly on the money spent by parents or children in purchasing lunch as the state's share of the matching funds formula established by the federal government.

To localities.

1. Every parent should be sent a letter explaining the school policy on free and reduced price lunches. A form should be enclosed. Children should not be used as couriers for these application forms.
2. No school should have a "quota" of free lunches. As many free lunches as are needed should be provided.
3. Lunches, especially free lunches, should be available at both the elementary and high school levels.
4. If children want to work at the school, they should be paid in cash at the same rate as others in similar work situations.
5. Children should be able to have free lunches at any time during the year, for whatever period of time they need them.
6. There should be a citizen advisory board on school lunches. The advisory board should include parents, parents of children receiving free lunches, and students.

7. Schools should provide a natural opportunity to combine nutrition education, cooking classes and meals for children. Parents could be taught nutrition and cooking and could prepare and share their children's lunches. This might also be a way to obtain more food and money for school lunches, since there are special provisions for the teaching and demonstration of nutrition and meal planning.

Recommendations re Other Food Programs

Given the present inadequacy of the food stamp, donated commodity and school lunch programs, we recommend that the school breakfast, supplemental food program, emergency food and medical services program, and the Vanick amendment extending food programs to private summer schools and camps be fully and adequately funded, expanded and extensively publicized.

FINAL COMMENT

It is our belief that the United States of America is not only financially able but morally obligated to assure that no one in this country suffer from hunger or malnutrition.

We also believe that every American has a right to life. No human being should be made to feel he has to divest himself of all dignity in order to physically survive.

All our recommendations stem from these two beliefs. We make this report in the belief that this country can and will assure all its citizens a healthy, dignified life.

**CALL TO RESEARCH
AND ACT
TO STOP HUNGER**

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