

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

\$500M Prison Bond Issue: Voters Must Choose Social Priorities

By Mark Phillips
Judicial Process Commission

New York's criminal justice system is in a state of crisis. Since 1972, our prison population has nearly doubled, giving New York the highest incarceration rate of any Northeast state. Today, more than 24,600 individuals are imprisoned in our state institutions, at an annual cost of \$17,000 per prisoner. Despite the addition of nearly 5,000 cells during the past nine years, the prison system is now operating at over 100 percent capacity.

Locking more people up for longer periods of time has not reduced the crime rate or made our communities safer. The addition of thousands of new cells has not eliminated the problem of overcrowding. Yet state officials are proposing more of the same.

When voters go to the polls on November 3, they will be faced with Proposition #1, a \$500 million bond issue that would be used primarily to finance the construction of over 4,000 new prison cells during the next three years. The initial cost of this massive building project has been put

at \$350 million, an average of \$86,000 per cell. Another \$125 million would be made available to local governments in the form of matching grants for new jail construction.

The costs of this proposal are staggering. With interest payments, the real cost of the bond to New York's taxpayers would be at least \$1.5 billion over the next thirty years. In addition, over \$70 million a year would have to be added to the prison system's budget just to operate this new capacity. No one has estimated how many more millions would be spent by

local governments for new jails and their operation.

Given these tremendous costs, new prison and jail expansion will divert limited tax resources from education and human service programs already being reduced under the federal budget cuts.

There are options other than this costly and ineffective proposal. Over 30 percent of the individuals in state prison were convicted of non-violent offenses. Use of alternative sentences such as intensive supervision, probation, community service work and victim restitution in

these cases would bring about significant reductions in the prison population while making our criminal justice system more responsive to the needs of both victim and offender.

Increased use of parole, time off sentences for good behavior and work-release facilities have all been used by other states to relieve overcrowding, with no increased risk to the public. New York can do the same.

In the long run, we must confront the reality that our crime problem reflects the continuing failure of our society to provide equal access

to quality education, relevant job opportunities, decent housing. It reflects the economic and social deterioration of our communities. If we are serious in our desire to reduce the crime rate, we can no longer afford to ignore these conditions.

On November 3, voters do have a choice. If we are interested in the quality of life in our communities, if we really want to make our homes and streets safer, the choice is clear. We must abandon the bankrupt policies of the past decade and set a new course. New prisons and jails are not the answer.

challenge

Volume 3

Number 14

October 1981

A Passion for Arms Shatters Dream of Justice

The September issue of The Dollar and the Scale, a newsletter published by the Community Affairs Vicariate of the Diocese of Providence, Rhode Island, printed an analysis of how President Reagan's "passion for military strength directly conflicts with his goal of economic recovery." Because we feel that an understanding of how Mr. Reagan's program for increased military spending will effect the economy, we are printing an edited version of that analysis.

— Francine Patella, Editor
President Reagan's plan for unprecedented acceleration of military spending would adversely affect the economy in a number of ways. It is feared by many that it will increase inflation and unemployment, divert investment capital away from the revitalization of the civilian economy, and endanger our internal security as a nation by reducing the

public funds available to meet social needs.

There are two ways in which sharply increased military spending affects capital investment in civilian industries. First, guaranteed growth in military expenditures gives investors a potent incentive to put their money into defense firms. This diversion of scarce capital into unproductive weapons development could speed the decline of the U.S. competitiveness within countries like Japan and West Germany in such civilian industries as electronics, automobiles, machinery, and clothing. The weapons industries drain off not only investment capital but also human capital: scientists, engineers, and skilled workers are lured by high salaries in the weapons industry away from advancing the technology of our civilian industries.

Secondly, since Mr. Reagan's proposed tax reductions for corporations and upper-income individuals exceed his Draconian cuts in social spending, his desired major increase in military spending can only be financed by a larger federal deficit. The deficit proposed by Mr. Reagan exceeds that proposed by former President Carter. Increased federal borrowing means increased demand for the scarce commodity of capital. By the law of supply and demand, this increased federal demand for capital means the price of money — the interest rate — goes up for everyone. High interest rates discourage companies from investing in new equipment, technology, and labor.

Military spending creates similar pressure on inflation. The classic definition of inflation is too many dollars chasing too few goods, or demand exceeding supply. Military spending pumps vast amounts of disposable income into the economy through the high salaries it pays the designers and builders of weapons. But it adds no consumable goods and services to the economy.

It should also be noted that weapons development and production is the least efficient way to create jobs with public funds because it is capital-intensive rather than labor-intensive. A billion dollars spent on weapons creates 45,800 jobs. Invested in mass transit construction, that one billion could create 58,000 jobs; it could produce 98,000 jobs if spent on public service employment.

Finally, consideration must be given to how public funds can best be spent to ensure national "security." Simon Ramo, the founder of the high-technology defense firm TRW, recently wrote, "We have to recognize that security is not based on military power alone, but also includes national morale and solidarity, economic strength and competitiveness, diplomatic skill and strategy, energy resource availability and numerous other influences."

IF
YOU
WANT
PEACE
WORK
FOR
JUSTICE
PAUL G

You and Courts

YOU AND THE CRIMINAL COURTS, a workshop to acquaint people with the operation of criminal courts and to create an awareness of the problems the court faces, sponsored by the Task Force on Courts of Church Women United, will take place on Thursday, Oct. 29, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 17 S. Fitzhugh Street.

If interested, please contact Church Women United at 454-1813 by Oct. 27.

Southern Tier Office Continues Expansion

By Father Neil Miller
Director

The Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry as of July 1, 1981, completed its first year under its expanded role of Social Ministry.

The first year has been a year of painful growth with its successes and failures. Some of the highlights of the first year were: establishment of the Community Food Bank; development of the Counseling Services; advocacy with the Welfare Issue; the Federal Budget Cuts; establishment of offices in Steuben and Schuyler Counties; formation of the Board; revitalization of the Regional Committees and parish contacts.

Our direction for the second year will lead us into:

1. A stronger thrust for parish education and service leaderships. This will include education and training for the Board of Directors, Parish Committees, Staff, Outreach workers, Volunteers.

2. The strengthening of the family through services — this includes counseling services for 180 families; family workshops; emergency assistance program of food, clothing and other emergencies.

3. To establish an effective presence in all the 5 counties through the establishment of centers and regional committees in order to create greater visibility in the Regions.

4. To help people to understand and prioritize issues both national and international. Special emphasis will be given to the Federal Budget Issue and the handicapped.

5. We are seeking funding for a program to help improve youth education and job skills.

6. The continuance of the Community Food Bank which has brought into the Southern Tier almost 100 tons of food. This food has been distributed throughout the 5 Southern Tier Counties.

Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation, a Catholic housing foundation incorporated in 1968 to address the problem of decent housing for low and moderate income families, and part of the Episcopal Diocese since July 1980, has two ongoing no-interest loan programs: Home Ownership, which assists families with down payments and closing costs so they can buy homes and Project Review which provides loans as seed money for not-for-profit housing organizations which are building or rehabbing housing. Education and Advocacy programs are also ongoing.

Highlights of next year's goals include:

- Allocation of loans funds to assist 15 to 20 families and 4 to 5 housing organizations.
- Completion of the foundation's first recycled home in a pilot project funded by the Episcopal Coalition for Human Needs. This home has been acquired by donation and will be recycled at the cost of rehabilitation to a low income family.
- Continuance of a program started this year of in-

creased technical assistance to not-for-profit housing groups to enhance the feasibility of their proposals and to help them find additional funding sources.

- Sponsorship of a HUD 202 elderly/handicapped housing project of 45 units which was proposed by an ecumenical group of Sodas churches. If HUD approved, the foundation will act as sponsor for the 40 year life of the project as well as provide loan funds.

Addition new goals include:

- (1) creation of linkages and leverages with other area foundations;
- (2) increased urban advocacy;
- (3) establishment of an annual home maintenance seminar to provide continued contact with families who have received home ownership loans or grants;
- (4) involvement with other organizations looking at the Single Room Occupancy situation heightened by the imminent closing of both "Y" dormitory facilities.

If you would be interested in more information about any of these programs or if you would like to volunteer to help BSEHF, achieve these goals, please contact Kathleen O'Neill, Executive Director, at 750 West Main Street, Rochester, New York 14611, or by phone, (716) 328-8860 or 328-6400.

Housing Group Sets Year's Aims

Fund Appeal

This month the Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation is conducting its annual financial appeal. All contributions are used to help low income people obtain better housing. Staff and office costs are totally supported by the Catholic and Episcopal dioceses. Your tax deductible contributions can be sent to the BSEHF office, 750 W. Main Street, Rochester, N.Y. 14611.

Increased technical assistance to not-for-profit housing groups to enhance the feasibility of their proposals and to help them find additional funding sources.

- Sponsorship of a HUD 202 elderly/handicapped housing project of 45 units which was proposed by an ecumenical group of Sodas churches. If HUD approved, the foundation will act as sponsor for the 40 year life of the project as well as provide loan funds.

Addition new goals include:

- (1) creation of linkages and leverages with other area foundations;
- (2) increased urban advocacy;
- (3) establishment of an annual home maintenance seminar to provide continued contact with families who have received home ownership loans or grants;
- (4) involvement with other organizations looking at the Single Room Occupancy situation heightened by the imminent closing of both "Y" dormitory facilities.

If you would be interested in more information about any of these programs or if you would like to volunteer to help BSEHF, achieve these goals, please contact Kathleen O'Neill, Executive Director, at 750 West Main Street, Rochester, New York 14611, or by phone, (716) 328-8860 or 328-6400.

This is Challenge, our second appearance in the Courier-Journal. We will appear from time to time in this newspaper to introduce Challenge to those of you not presently receiving it. In November we will resume our regular format.

How to Subscribe

If you wish to subscribe to Challenge, please send \$3.00, fill out the form below and mail to:

Editor, Challenge

750 W. Main Street, Rochester, NY 14611

Checks should be made out to Campaign for Human Development.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip Code _____

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

New Date Set for Campaign for Human Development

Appeal Sunday, December 6
Collection Sunday, December 13

Respect Life Sunday
Saturday, January 30
Sunday, January 31