

Counterbudget urges state to stem growth of poverty

By Teresa A. Parsons

Poverty has begun to assume a new face in New York state. In addition to its now-familiar victims — members of female-headed households, blacks, Hispanics and city-dwellers — poverty is claiming people who were thought to be immune to economic stress.

The new casualties of poverty were once members of the American middle class — working people, rural residents, the middle-aged, those who are relatively well-educated and those whose families are intact. Between 1980 and 1984, people in those categories fell below the poverty line at a rate faster than that of any other population group in the state, according to a study released in January, entitled "New York's Poor: A Growing Problem."

As state legislators debate Governor Mario Cuomo's proposed 1987/88 budget in Albany, members of the lobbying group that commissioned the study are taking their own "Counterbudget '88" to human-service advocates and agency representatives throughout the state.

Counterbudget is published each year by the Statewide Emergency Network for Social and Economic Security (SENSES), in reaction to Governor Mario Cuomo's executive budget. SENSES is the lobbying arm of a state-wide coalition of organizations concerned about poor people and poverty-related issues.

SENSES staff director Russell Sykes and Fred Newdom, a member of the Counterbudget committee and chairman of the National Association of Social Workers, briefed representatives of Monroe County-area agencies and church groups on the Counterbudget proposal last Thursday, March 5. Rochester was one of nine stops on a state-wide tour that will also include a briefing in Ithaca at noon on Friday, March 13, in the Women's Community Center.

Counterbudget '88 recommends allocating \$320 million more than Governor Mario Cuomo has proposed in his executive budget; this money would go directly to the poor and to programs that serve them. Among the priorities identified by drafters of the Counterbudget

are increased allowances for basic public assistance grants and shelter, increased and expanded Medicaid eligibility levels and new job-training programs.

Counterbudget '88 praises Governor Cuomo's current proposals for education and economic development, increased tax relief for the poor and funding to house the homeless. Yet its writers claim that he has not proposed a comprehensive program to combat the growth of poverty, and that "the illusion of action is greater than the reality."

Between 1980 and 1984, the number of people under the age of 65 living in poverty increased 29 percent to 2.64 million in New York state, according to the SENSES study, which was based on data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.

Children constituted the single-largest and fastest growing group of poor people under the age of 65 (43.7 percent). Their number topped 1.15 million in 1984.

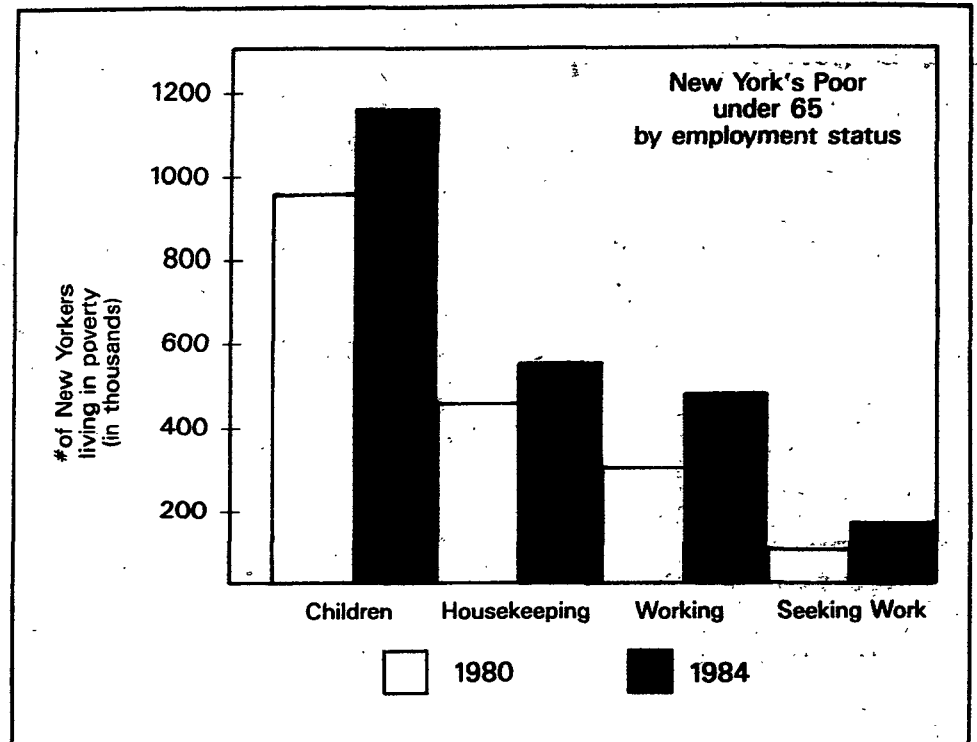
Geographically, poverty crept up fastest on rural people. The SENSES study noted an 84 percent increase among the rural poor over the same four-year period.

While the bulk of people living in poverty still comprised female-headed, black and Hispanic households, the number of whites, working people and intact families below the poverty line grew markedly. New York state's working population increased by 320,000 between 1980 and 1984. More than half of those new workers (55.3 percent) still lived in poverty.

Increases in the number of working poor suggest that workers displaced by the decline in high-paid manufacturing jobs are falling into the ranks of the poor, even though they are employed — sometimes in two or more jobs.

The Elmira and Chemung county area, for instance, has lost an estimated 7,000 manufacturing-based jobs over the last 10 to 15 years, according to Kathleen Dubel, peace and justice director for the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry.

Men and women who once earned \$8 or more per hour; in addition to comprehensive



Children and working people were among the fastest growing groups of people living in poverty in New York state between 1980 and 1984, according to a study released in January by the Statewide Emergency Network for Social and Economic Security (SENSES). The study showed that, except for the poor, the size of all other income classes either decreased or remained the same during the four-year period.

benefits, are now starting over in such minimum-wage jobs as parking cars, doing janitorial work and flipping hamburgers in fast-food restaurants. Although such people often have a long work history and are highly skilled, their specific skills have become obsolete.

"They are competing with people who haven't been in the work economy before, for a relatively scarce number of jobs at relatively low pay," Dubel said. "It's a real blow to their self-esteem."

"Lots of folks are working, sometimes at two part-time jobs," she added. "But these working people don't have the traditional benefits that have tended to lift people out of poverty."

Among the standard benefits that many working people have lost is health insurance, which ranks among the primary concerns listed in Counterbudget '88. Three-quarters of a million people in New York state lack any kind

of health insurance, according to "New Yorkers Are Losing Their Health Insurance," another SENSES study released last March. Nearly half of those people are children.

Both the study and the experience of health care — workers in Chemung County indicate that when people are without health insurance, they avoid seeking medical care.

At the Family Health Center in Elmira, volunteer nurses and nurse practitioners routinely see patients who, because they can't afford a doctor's care without health insurance, put off preventive treatment, according to Elaine Caso, center coordinator.

"If we weren't here, people have told us they just wouldn't go a doctor," she said. "They would suffer until they had a serious problem and then go to the emergency room."

Emergency care costs four or five times more than preventive care, Caso pointed out. And the bills for those who cannot pay and are uninsured are eventually passed along to other health-care consumers.

In addition, working people and those who depend on public-assistance grants frequently avoid seeking health care because that portion of their living allowance is often needed to pay for rent or food.

Counterbudget '88 recommends that the state increase basic needs and shelter allowances and spend more on education and outreach to those who are eligible for such benefits.

First issued 11 years ago, the Counterbudget has increased its credibility during the past two or three years by identifying sources of funding.

This year's Counterbudget identifies nearly \$1 billion in revenues that the state could

Continued on facing page

Pilgrimages of Faith for the Marian Year.

Our Holy Father Pope John Paul II has proclaimed June, 1987 as the beginning of the Marian year—"A special year dedicated to Mary." This celebration also ushers in the start of the Third Millennium of Christianity in the year 2000.

In celebration, St. Paul's Journeys is offering two modestly-priced Pilgrimages of Faith through your church, school or Roman Catholic organization. To maintain the dignity of both programs, a member of the clergy will be invited to accompany each group of 20 participants.

Pilgrimage I:
MEDJUGORJE APPARITIONS
7-days, \$825 to \$1116*
including airfare.

Medjugorje is a little village in Yugoslavia where, nearly 2000 personal apparitions of Our Lady have been reported. Since 1981, almost 4 million pilgrims have visited this place of renewal and rededication. You'll stay in the medieval walled city of Dubrovnik with transportation provided for daily trips to Medjugorje and for celebrating Mass at St. James Church.

Both pilgrimages include roundtrip transatlantic flights on a scheduled airline, all land and air transportation as per itineraries, first class hotels, 2 meals daily (except in Rome), sightseeing, admissions, transfers and gratuities.

Weekly departures scheduled from May 7 to Nov. 12.

*Per person, double occupancy, based on roundtrip airfare from New York and departure date. Chicago departures also available.



ST. PAUL'S JOURNEYS, INC.
313 East 89th St., New York, NY 10128.
(212) 410-5237.

Please send information on Marian Year Pilgrimages.

CJ-312

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

CONTINENTAL

SCHOOL

There's an Action Career Ahead...



- HAIRDRESSING
- ELECTROLYSIS
- DENTAL ASSISTANT
- NURSING ASSISTANT
- ADVANCED HAIRSTYLING

We offer specialized, hands-on training in fast-growing fields. Our newly remodeled facilities and state of the art equipment can qualify you for an exciting career in just a few months.

Our school is accredited by the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools, and the National Accrediting Commission of Cosmetology Arts and Sciences.

So call or visit today:

FINANCIAL AID IS AVAILABLE TO ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

49 Stone Street, Rochester

232-2222

342-9011 2255 Ridge Rd. E.
Culver Ridge Plaza, Rochester

344-0886 215 Main Street
Batavia

272-8060 633 Jefferson Rd.
Rochester

MOVING?

Please Remember to Include Your Mailing Label when notifying us of an address change.

COURIER-JOURNAL

Bishop Matthew H. Clark
President

Bishop Dennis W. Hickey
General Manager

Karen M. Franz
Editor

Vol. 98, No. 22 March 12, 1987

Courier-Journal (USPS 135-580)

Published weekly except week after July 4 and Christmas, by the Rochester Catholic Press Association. Subscription rates: Single copy 50¢. One-year subscription in U.S. \$15. Canada and Foreign \$20. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Rd., Rochester, N.Y. 14624, (716) 328-4340. Second Class Postage paid at Rochester, N.Y. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Courier-Journal, 1150 Buffalo Rd., Rochester, N.Y. 14624.