

tional Product, and no group on Capitol Hill has the power or the self-restraint to end the debauch. Martin Feldstein, formerly chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers and a prudent fellow if there ever was one, has suggested modest cuts in the cost-of-living adjustments that engaud Social Security and Medicare, along with some additional taxes; but, of course, all the hyphenates led by the big-spenders let out an enormous howl.

Over the past two decades volup-

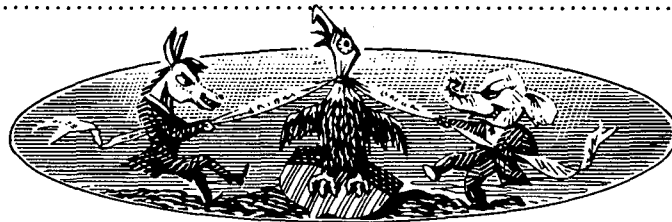
tuous increases in Social Security and Medicare have accounted for all of government's increased share of GNP. These expenditures have grown from 2.3 percent of the GNP in 1960 to 6.6 percent in 1984, while defense spending as a share of GNP fell by one-third, at least until 1980. During the 1970s Social Security's benefits to retirees rose by 50 percent in real dollars, though the average employee's earnings increased not at all. Yet let a budget-balancer or budget-cutter suggest, say,

a freeze on Social Security's cost-of-living adjustments, and the big-spenders shout as though orphans were being heaved into the street.

The big-spenders remain Washington's enduring force, despite the present alarm over deficits. In league with the special interests that their lush programs have created they exert continual pressure for more spending. Even in these days of budget restraint, they nip away with more money here, more money there. Now it is bilingual educa-

tion that is fattened, then it is the Rural Electrification Administration—up 579.4 percent in fiscal year 1984. Of all the hyphenates, only the tax-cutters save the citizenry from incessant fleecing. But can we amass these deficits forever? The average Americano knows. In a recent government poll 81 percent expressed their concern. Do you know what kind of hyphenated Americans they are? They are budget-cutters, but on Capitol Hill they are outnumbered and outshouted. □

CAPITOL IDEAS



HABEMUS VIGORBACHEV

by Tom Bethell

When the black smoke emerged from the Kremlin chimney, announcing Mikhail Gorbachev's victory in the latest power struggle, sympathetic vibrations were set up in the U.S. press. On the day after the great event, the *Washington Post* seemed positively festive, triumphantly proclaiming secular liberalism's *Habemus Papam*: "GORBACHEV BECOMES SOVIET LEADER HOURS AFTER CHERNENKO DIES AT 73." In somewhat smaller type, the *New York Times* suggested that socialism's latest Pope was already hard at work: "New Leader, 54, Loses No Time to Announce His Own Program."

The word "leader" itself suggests how widespread is the undeclared sympathy for small-c Communism among our patriotism pressies. The "leader" of a country whose subjects must be prevented from running away by barbed wire, walls, and guards might more appropriately be called a dictator or a despot. But such ugly labels are reserved exclusively for *anti-socialist* heads of state, as a check with the Nexis computer retrieval system will show.

The press corps showed a kind of subdued enthusiasm for the idea that the new Soviet despot would be able to crowd Reagan off the airwaves by sheer magnetism. "Now Reagan cannot count on having things his own way on the propaganda level," wrote *Newsweek*, apparently believing that its

coverage of Reagan has been doting, that of Chernenko and Andropov critical. And there was more than a hint of relish in Mary McGrory's observation that the "focused" and "plausible" Gorbachev had "enormous potential as a wedge-driver in the West."

One day I spotted *Washington Post* associate editor Robert Kaiser on the "CBS Morning News" doing a growly-voiced imitation of his boss, Ben Bradlee. A few days later, Kaiser wrote an astonishing article for the paper's "Outlook" section ("Now Russia Will Change") revealing that "our Great Communicator in Washington may finally have a serious rival."

Reagan need hardly worry on the image front, of course. The frail, white-thatched, out-of-breath Chernenko came across as about as harmless a Kremlin figure as we are likely to find. Gorbachev will soon be seen for what he is—the *capo*

di capi of the Kremlin Crime Syndicate.

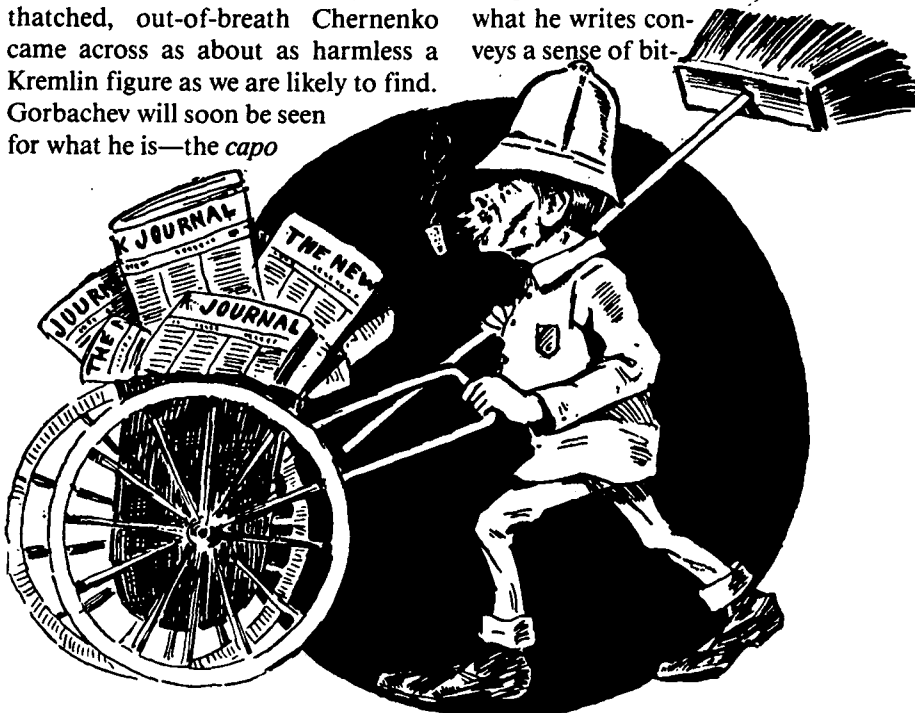
Several thoughts came to mind as I surveyed the media coverage of the latest Kremlin transition. No one mentions this, of course, but there is in the first place an amazing amount of power-worship among our senior media patriots. And hardly a word is whispered about the incredible brutality of the Soviet system of "government," which obviously is not really a government in the sense that we use the word.

I think it is the comparative powerlessness of leftist intellectuals that so drives them up the wall when they contemplate America. Kaiser in much of what he writes conveys a sense of bit-

ter resentment of America, and I notice that he at the same time urges us to adopt measures that would increase the power wielded by Washington over the rest of the country. The impression that he and some other journalists convey is one of utter frustration at the independence conferred by the decentralized American system—resulting in the most frightful ticky-tackies rushing about making millions without so much as having to get permission from Washington first.

In the Soviet Union, by contrast (let us not call it Russia, which does not exist, even though there are Russians; just as there are Palestinians but no Palestine), they really did make a huge effort to get everything under control: to centralize power, to set up a Central Planning authority, and to give the intellectuals their rightful role under the sun, namely, bossing everybody else about. Make no mistake, that is one of the main reasons why Communism is so tremendously appealing to Western intellectuals.

As Joseph Sobran pointed out a few days after Chernenko's death, the one thing you couldn't find anywhere in the media coverage was a word of criticism of the socialist ideology, which gives shape, energy, and direction to the Soviet "government." This is not merely a polite refusal to criticize others—to "impose our views"—as fierce and daily denunciations of South Africa tell us. It is, rather, a tacit recognition of the strong affinity between contemporary liberalism and Communism itself, which are in reality nothing more



Tom Bethell is The American Spectator's Washington correspondent.

than different ontogenetic stages of the same organic whole. Modern liberalism yearns and strives to transform itself into Communism. Both have the same defining traits: hostility to property, family, and religion, and an endless struggle to atomize the citizenry and make each interchangeable person equally dependent on the state.

That Gorbachev's relative youth should excite so much enthusiasm is

another indicator of the surreptitious faith in socialism that pervades so much of American intellectual life. Socialist ideology is based on the belief that a centrally situated genius, or at any rate a group of such people, can devise and ordain a benign and rational plan of existence for the rest of us. We will then toil cooperatively for the common good, the granaries will be full, and of course the planners will go to

their dachas on the weekends. Alas, there are pitfalls: Old age will come to the best of us, even central planners and Great Helmsmen. In the Kremlin this has been the case since 1977, Kaiser says. (Now he tells us!) Now do you see why socialism hasn't been working so well lately? Its leaders have been infirm. And this is a perfectly reasonable excuse if you believe the underlying theory. If you have a decrepit pilot you

can expect the ship to go off course. But now (oh happy day) . . . Habemus Helmsman! By the sheer vigor of his commands, Gorbachev will set things right again. Moreover, he will bring in "younger men" who will be "more effective administrators" because they will be "products of an entirely different background," Kaiser assures us.

Kaiser has been the *Post's* Moscow correspondent, but he shows here and elsewhere that he does not understand why the Soviet system cannot work in practice, why age has nothing to do with the real problem, and why it is almost impossible to change the system in such a way that it can be made to work. To understand this, three concepts have to be borne in mind: bottlenecks, bureaucracy, and corruption.

I have a horrible feeling that I have said this before, and I do know for sure that it will not make the tiniest impression on true believers, but I will say it again as simply as possible (and doff my cap once again to Von Mises and Friedrich Hayek).

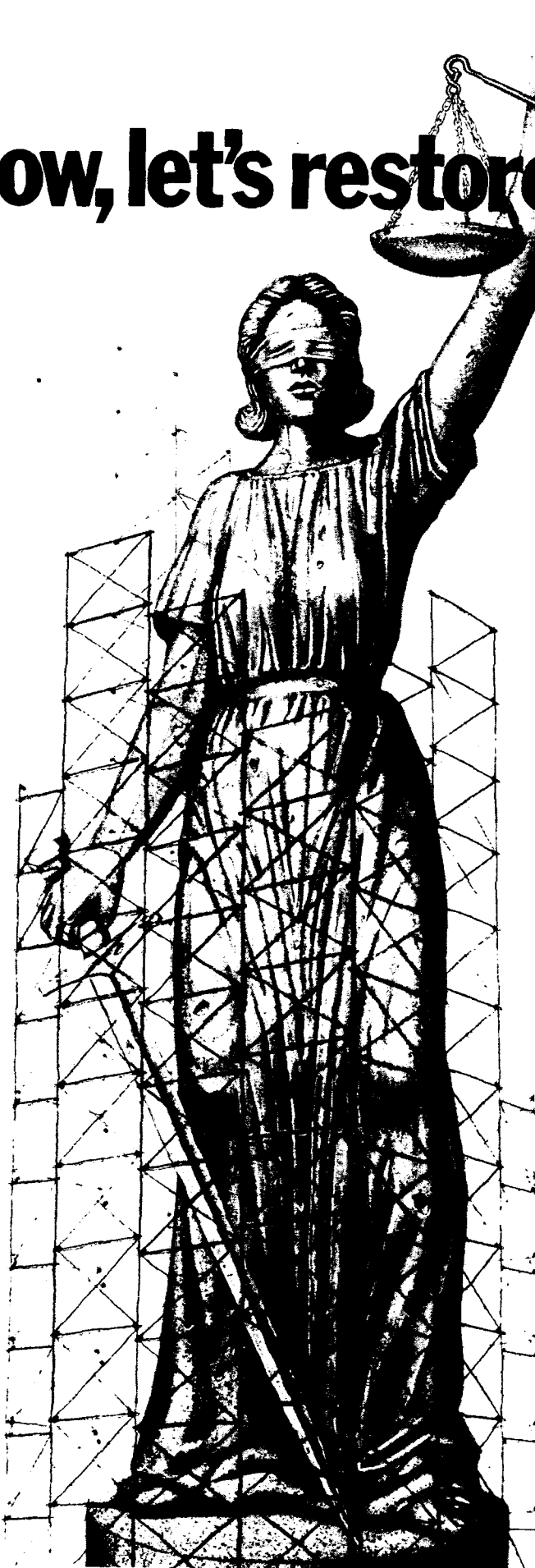
Socialism does not work and cannot work as planned because it is impossible to get more than a small amount of information into Command Central. Nevertheless, this information must get there if the Great Helmsmen are to know what commands they have to give to make everything work properly. This point is at least understood by those Washingtonians who have given some thought to the following problem: How do you get a message to the man in the Oval Office? Obviously, there are potentially a billion times more messages than he can ever absorb. A lot of money is spent in Washington trying to solve this intriguing problem.

Now, try to imagine how the U.S. economy would work if no one was allowed to do anything until he got permission from the White House. No such permission could be given, of course, until the White House received detailed information from the hinterland, understood all the economic difficulties, and devised plans to solve them. There would be a very bad "bottleneck" at the White House.

Now you can see why there are "bottlenecks" in the Soviet economy.

To widen the bottleneck, and increase the quantity of information reaching the command post, and in particular to put this information in order of precedence (some things are more important than others), the Great Helmsman, or the Man in the Oval Office, could hire a lot of staff. Pretty soon you would have, what? Bureaucracy, right? And what do our home-grown Kremlinologists think is wrong with the Soviet system? Too much bureaucracy. The cliché now is that the

Now, let's restore Civil Justice.



Year after year, our civil justice system has become slower. More costly. Less fair to the very people it was meant to help.

We all pay the price. Some of us pay in the frustration of waiting for a case to end, or by seeing a settlement eaten away by legal costs. All of us pay in the form of higher taxes and insurance premiums.


Experts agree on the urgent need for civil justice repair. Chief Justice Burger has criticized "the high cost of legal services and the slow pace of justice." Derek Bok, president of Harvard and former dean of Harvard Law, has called our legal system "the most expensive in the world."

A 1984 Rand Corporation study of thousands of asbestos-related lawsuits shows how serious the crisis has become. Cases closed took an average two years and eight months, with 11 percent taking six years. How much money went to asbestos victims? Only 37 percent of the expenses and compensation paid by defendants and insurers. The other 63 percent went to pay litigation costs.

Can anything be done? We think it can.

We're the Insurance Information Institute. Our members, property and casualty insurance companies, are vitally involved in this issue. They've joined with others—doctors, lawyers, government officials, business leaders—in coalitions of concerned citizens. Together, they're developing new solutions. In many states, their ideas are being translated into action.

Our latest report, *The Civil Justice Crisis*, examines the reforms now being proposed. It tells how you can get involved. We'd like you to have a copy, free of charge.



1Y

Insurance Information Institute
110 William Street
New York, New York 10038

Please send me a free copy of
The Civil Justice Crisis.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____



Insurance Information Institute
A nonprofit action and information center

"vigorous" Gorbachev, aided perhaps by his chic wife, will be able to "cut through" it. For Kaiser the bureaucracy is "entrenched" and Gorbachev (he has "youth" and "human appeal," let us not forget) will be able to "confront and conquer" the bureaucrats' "parochial interests." Harrison Salisbury suggested on the "CBS Morning News," quite erroneously, that maybe the new Helmsman will simply sweep the bureaucracy away. (Imagine Reagan alone in the White House, trying to decide which piece of mail to open next.)

The truth is, it is very difficult to transmit information in a command economy without prices (information-transmitting devices). Without bureaucracy it would be totally impossible and the system would come to a complete halt.

Now imagine that as a way of circumventing the bottleneck people start exchanging things and making things without going through authorized channels—without getting permission from the top. That indeed is a possible solution to the design flaw in the socialist model. But what are these people doing? They are breaking the law. "Corruption" is afoot in the land! And that must be stopped if the system is to work as it was designed to work by Comrade Marx and Comrade Lenin. So in order to stop corruption you crack the whip, shoot a few people—and restore the bottlenecks.

That was Yuri Andropov's solution: crackdown. And believe me, Kaiser greatly admires Andropov's "campaign against sloth and corruption," conducted when he was a mere shadow of his former self, an "old, worn out man." Now think of what Gorbachev might achieve if he were to follow the Andropov model. Well, of course, he could make things far worse than they already are. *It is only because "corruption" facilitated activities occur outside official channels that socialism ticks over at all.* Closing off these bypass operations could prove fatal.

My impression is that Gorbachev already tried such Draconian remedies when he was in charge of agriculture—with disastrous results. Grain production declined from 237 million tons to 170 million tons between 1978-84. A decline of that magnitude almost certainly suggests a successful campaign against "corruption". But Gorbachev was promoted nonetheless, and he could try it again. He believes in force, obviously, and the Western media will be urging him on. How revealing, in any event, that it is the *circumvention* of the Communist system ("corruption"), rather than the system itself, that our media pundits object to.

The only way out of the socialist im-

passe is decentralization—which also gets you out of socialism itself. Decentralization means making formerly "corrupt" activities legal. But *that* means depriving enormous numbers of officials of their jobs. This may not be totally impossible (China seems to be attempting the feat) but it is exceedingly difficult, especially when you realize that those who hold these jobs are members of something called the Com-

munist party (remember that?). Also, decentralizing decision-making goes against the tenets of Communist ideology, which is to say socialist ideology. Carried beyond a certain point decentralization converts a black market into a free market, and state property into private property.

So, to make the Communist system work, all Gorbachev would have to do would be to break up the Communist

party, deprive its members of jobs, and say farewell to its reigning ideology. Then everything will work wonderfully. Some optimists imagine that this might actually happen because they have persuaded themselves that those who call themselves Communists don't really believe in Communism. I think otherwise. If liberals believe in Communism, I don't see why Commies wouldn't. □



The International Preview Society invites you to accept a
No-Obligation Classical Music Membership
and your choice of any...

3 Digital Recordings \$1
for only 1

plus shipping and handling

DVORAK, SYMPHONY NO. 9 IN E MINOR (FROM THE NEW WORLD)
Chicago Symphony Orchestra/Solti.
"The playing is superlatively good."—
Gramophone London 115168

MOZART, PIANO CONCERTOS NO. 15 IN B FLAT; NO. 21 IN C (ELVIRA MADI-GAN) • Alfred Brendel, piano. Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields/Marriner. Philips 115421

AISLE SEAT (GREAT FILM MUSIC)
The Boston Pops/Williams. E.T., Char-
lots Of Fire, Raiders Of The Lost Ark,
The Wizard Of Oz, Gone With The
Wind, more. Philips 115082

MOZART, SYMPHONIES NO. 40 IN G MINOR, K. 550; NO. 41 IN C, K. 551 (JUPITER) • James Levine leads the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in a superb recording. RCA 104810

VIVALDI, THE FOUR SEASONS • Simon Standage, violin. The English Concert/Pinnock. "...the performance as a whole is breathtaking."—Stereo Review Archiv 115356

SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE
Original cast album. "It's the most exciting thing to happen since stereo met *My Fair Lady*."—High Fidelity RCA 154014

MUSSORGSKY-RAVEL, PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION; RAVEL, LE TOMBEAU DE COUPERIN • Dallas Symphony Orchestra/Mata. "...spirited readings."—Ovation RCA 114344

PAVARTOTTI: MAMMA • Title song, *Vieni sul mar, Non ti scordar di me, Musica proibita, Vivere*, 11 more. Henry Mancini, arranger & conductor. London 115310

HOROWITZ AT THE MET • Scarlatti, 6 Sonatas; Chopin, Ballade No. 4 & Waltz in A Flat, Op. 69, No. 1; Liszt, Ballade No. 2; Rachmaninoff, Prelude in G Minor. RCA 151876

SHOSTAKOVICH, SYMPHONY NO. 5
Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam/Haitink. "...quite magnificent... altogether outstanding."—Gramophone London 115401

ELGAR, VIOLIN CONCERTO • Itzhak Perlman, violin. Chicago Symphony Orchestra/Barenboim. A grammy winner! "...dazzling."—Gramophone DG 105499

ORFF, CARMINA BURANA • Hendricks, Aler, Hagegård. London Symphony Orchestra & Chorus/Mata. A masterful recording of this modern favorite. RCA 144503

OFFENBACH, GAITE PARISIENNE
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra/Previn. "...a revelation... a brilliantly fresh interpretation."—Gramophone Philips 115261

HIGH, BRIGHT, LIGHT & CLEAR • The Canadian Brass play Baroque music: Bach, Air On The G-String; Mouret, Fanfare (Masterpiece Theatre Theme); more. RCA 144529

WAGNER, ORCHESTRAL HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE RING • Vienna Philharmonic/Solti. Ride Of The Valkyries, Magic Fire Music, Forest Murmurs, Wotan's Farewell, more. London 115426

BACH, ORGAN WORKS • Toccata and Fugue in D Minor; Prelude and Fugue in E Flat; Prelude, Largo and Fugue in C. Daniel Chorzempa, organ. Philips 115193

JAMES GALWAY & HENRY MANCINI: IN THE PINK • The Pink Panther, Breakfast At Tiffany's, Pennywhistle Jig, Two For The Road, Cameo For Flute, more. RCA 151758

This remarkable \$1 offer is being made to introduce you to an outstanding classical music membership—with never any obligation to buy. The International Preview Society features such artists as James Galway... Neville Marriner... Vladimir Ashkenazy... Vladimir Horowitz... Georg Solti... Luciano Pavarotti... James Levine... Placido Domingo... Leonard Bernstein—and hundreds of other world-renowned classical performers.

No obligation to buy—ever!
You'll find hundreds of outstanding albums in each issue of Preview, the Society's bulletin, which will be sent to you every 4 weeks. You will also receive 2 special sale issues, giving you 15 opportunities a year to shop for fine music. Each issue highlights a Main Selection and scores of alternates. But there is no obligation to accept any offering at anytime.

You choose only the music you want!
If you'd like to accept the Main Selection, you need not do a thing; it will be sent automatically. If you'd prefer an alternate selection or none at all, just mail back the Notification Card by the specified date. You'll always have at least 10 days to decide.

Substantial savings with our half-price bonus plan.
For every regular purchase you do make, you may choose a Bonus album for only half of the members' club price! That can amount to savings of more than 55%! Shipping and handling, plus any applicable sales tax, are added to all shipments.

Three records or cassettes for just \$1!
Begin your membership now by choosing any 3 digital albums shown here for just \$1 plus shipping and handling. That's a savings of as much as \$31.94 off the suggested list prices! Send no money now. We want you to judge for yourself before you decide to buy. If not delighted, return your 3 albums at the end of 10 days without obligation.

ATTENTION COMPACT DISC BUYERS!

Now there's a Club just for you! The Compact Disc Club offers you hundreds of Compact Discs each year, featuring a full range of the latest CD albums from classical to popular/soft rock—with never an obligation to buy. And a Half-Price Bonus Plan gives you even greater savings on Compact Discs.

Take a Compact Disc of your choice now for only \$1!

Simply fill out the coupon. We'll send you any title shown above on Compact Disc and bill you later for only \$1 plus shipping & handling. Club details are similar to those of The International Preview Society noted above. Full details will follow, plus the same 10-day return privilege as noted above if not fully satisfied.

Mail to: The International Preview Society
P.O. Box 91406
Indianapolis, IN 46291

YES! Please accept my membership in The International Preview Society and send me, for 10 days' free examination, the 3 albums I have indicated below. I may return them after 10 days and owe nothing... or keep them and pay only \$1 plus shipping/handling.

Please send all selections on ☐ Record ☐ Cassette

Write Selection Numbers here:

Name (please print)

Address

City State Zip

Phone (Area Code) P-MA (PJ)

☐ YES, please enroll me, instead, as a Charter Member in the Compact Disc Club and send my introductory selection for only \$1 plus shipping & handling. I reserve the right to return my CD if not satisfied, and owe nothing, with no further obligation. Full membership details will accompany my shipment.

Write Selection Number here: UES28 (ZS)

Limited to new members, continental USA only; one membership per household. We reserve the right to request additional information. Local taxes, if any, will be added.



William Tucker

VISITS WITH THE HOMELESS

How some people live on \$50,000 a year.

"Help the Homeless," said a button pinned to the woman's beret. She was black, about 30, and standing in front of a table of trinkets being sold by a sidewalk vendor on 33rd Street in Manhattan.

"What do you think New York City ought to do for the homeless?" I asked her.

"Well, you know, they could give us a little more money. I've only got \$325 a month to live on. I've got my four kids to feed, and it's hard to do."

Her name was Carmen. She was not unattractive, intelligent, and spoke with a trace of an accent that she finally told me was Puerto Rican. Her home was the Martinique, a beautiful old tourist hotel facing Herald Square that used to have three luxurious restaurants, and now teems with 2,000 welfare tenants—500 women and 1,500 children.

"I was in Section 8 housing down on West Third Street," she told me. "We got burned out. I've been here about two months. We're waiting until something opens up in the projects."

For years, getting into the projects—city-sponsored housing—has been one of the most coveted goals of New York's poor. Waiting periods were once two years, but for the last decade the city has given immediate priority to people whose apartments burned down. As a result, tenants often burned down their buildings in order to move to the top of the list. Add this to a landlord's incentive to burn down his own building to rid himself of rent-controlled tenants, and you have the South Bronx.

Now, however, the waiting periods have swelled to ten years. Even arson can't get you into a city housing project. Consequently, there is a new category of "homeless."

I spent two weeks in early March floating among New York City's

population of 50,000 homeless people. I visited the Men's Shelter, where I ended up posing as just another homeless resident. I did volunteer duty in a synagogue that has been temporarily converted into a makeshift shelter. I visited the Coalition for the Homeless, headquarters of the legal attack for "homeless rights," and spent another afternoon talking with people in front of the Martinique, one of New York's largest "welfare hotels."

It is difficult to sum up except perhaps to say four things: 1) There is a hard core of homeless people, most of them refugees from mental hospitals, who are incapable of taking care of themselves; 2) there is a down-and-out population of homeless men who could probably take care of themselves; 3) the "homeless families" that are now surging into the system are really the familiar black-woman-and-her-illegitimate-children welfare families in a new guise; and 4) the people who are most emotionally involved in helping the homeless haven't the slightest idea what they're doing.

Lumping the first three categories together as "the homeless" seems useful only to the fourth category, i.e.,

those who patronize the homeless. First, it makes for a classification that is racially and ethnically neutral. Second, it obscures the fact that we are only dealing with problems that liberal programs have created. And third, it fends off public opinion that is probably getting tired of dealing with "welfare families."

What I encountered in several hours at the Martinique, for example, had little to do with "homelessness." It was simply the sociological debris from the catastrophic upheaval that has occurred in the black family over the last twenty years.

Thomasina was typical. A black woman, age 28, she had been living in two rooms at the Martinique for the last three months with her six children. She wore a red beret and sunglasses, and her two bottom front teeth were missing. She could have been 50.

"I had my own apartment and my own job six months ago," she said. "I was living in Columbus, Ohio. I came to visit my sister here, and while we were staying her apartment burned down. So they put me in here."

What happened to her job and apartment? "I don't know—they're gone now. That's the way it goes sometimes, you know." Thomasina didn't seem terribly concerned about getting in or out of the Martinique. "They put you on a bus every week and take you around to show you apartments, and tell you you have to take something. I didn't like anything they showed me yet, so I'm staying right here."

Carmen was the same way. She had four children. Had she ever had a husband? I asked.

"Are you kidding? Get beat up all the time? No sir, not me."

She actually seemed fairly responsible. She had worked as a store clerk, and was now tending one end of the trinket table for the elderly Oriental who was operating the sidewalk stand. He was paying her \$3.00 an hour.

"The only thing I don't like about it here at the hotel are the fights," she told me. "A lot of women beat their children. You know, they get mad at 'em and whip 'em or lock 'em outside. Or else they spend their welfare money on a nickel bag instead of feeding their kids. A six-year-old got raped in there a couple of weeks ago, too."

She said she wasn't particularly looking for another place to live. Her room at the Martinique wasn't all that bad. After we finished talking, she urged me to come up and visit her, and wanted to give me her phone number.

Where were the men in this world? A lot of them were standing right outside, their noses almost literally pressed against the glass.

Cloyd was a 29-year-old black who paced back and forth in front of the hotel like a caged fox. He was thin and wiry, with a strung-out look. A fresh two-inch scar ran down his left nostril, the stitch-marks still clearly visible.

"They won't let me in," he said. "These bastards won't let me past the



William Tucker is a contributing editor of Harper's.