

Russ - W. Va. Public Radio
11/21/85

J476

QUESTION: A PHYSICIAN'S TASK FORCE HAS REPORTED THAT SOME TWENTY MILLION PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES SUFFER FROM HUNGER. WHAT CAN WASHINGTON DO ABOUT THIS, AND WHAT ARE THEY DOING ABOUT IT?

ANSWER: I have been reviewing the report, Hunger in America - The Growing Epidemic, which outlines the findings of the Physician Task Force on Hunger in America. The task force outlines a number of steps to end hunger and prevent its return. These steps are very much like those outlined by the democratic party in Congress pursuant to a report by Senator Edward Kennedy titled Going Hungry in America which was issued in December, 1983. I am in full agreement with the Task Force on these recommendations. While we must always consider the looming \$200 billion federal deficit we must make every effort to once again fight hunger in America. We must take legislative action to terminate administrative policies which harass and otherwise prevent needy eligible citizens from receiving food stamp assistance; we must strengthen the food stamp program and remove restrictive food stamp measures; we must restore child care, utilize the WIC and Medicaid programs more fully to protect high-risk children, expand WIC and extend Medicaid benefits; we must expand elderly meals programs; we must protect families by strengthening income support programs, expanding unemployment benefits, and expanding AFDC assistance. However, with the current deficit and with the current administrations defense orientated policies, Congress can not do all that is necessary. It is imperative though that we as a society address this issue. I fully believe that public support, coupled with private initiative and innovation, can crack the wall of poverty. We can not afford to be a society blind to the truth that poverty exists in America.

QUESTION: IS HUNGER A PROBLEM IN WEST VIRGINIA, AND WHAT IS BEING DONE AND SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT IT?

ANSWER: Recently, I received a study published by the West Virginia University Department of Community Medicine dealing specifically with this issue. The study clearly pointed to the conclusion that there is nutritional need in West Virginia. The Food Stamp Program is not sufficient to meet the State's needs; the food distributed by "food banks" is inadequate in both quantity and nutritional value; the Women, Infant and Children Supplemental Food Program serves less than 30% of those eligible in West Virginia; the frequency of low birthweight in the State points to the presence of nutritional inadequacy; and the postneonatal mortality rate in West Virginia is highest in the nation. The effects of malnutrition in the State are widespread, longlasting and expensive. We in West Virginia must take responsible action to combat the epidemic of hunger in our State. The report contained a number of recommendations to address hunger on the state level which should be given serious consideration. (I will be more than happy to discuss these recommendations, however, my time here is short and I have one more question to answer. The important thing to remember is that... OR Please allow me to relay to you the report's recommendations...) As at the federal level, we must take action and not rebuke the need.

Optimal

QUESTION: HOUSE DEMOCRATS FIGURE THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS CUT NUTRITION PROGRAMS BY SOME 12 BILLION DOLLARS. WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THIS, AND ARE THOSE CUTS JUSTIFIED?

ANSWER: There is no doubt in my mind that the President has set spending priorities, and programs to assist the needy are not on the top of his list. His proposed budgets to Congress have consistently reinforced my belief. The President's second proposed budget for FY 1986 through FY 1988 provided for an increase of \$24.1 billion in military spending, while decreasing domestic programs spending by \$17.1 billion. While I certainly support a strong national defense, the Administration consistently requests an overabundance of funds for military programs while practically ignoring the dire and immediate needs of our society.

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West Virginia Public Radio Series on Hunger
Jesse Steinberg 484-1840

NJR-- West Virginia Public Radio is doing a series on hunger in the United States and in West Virginia. I got a call from their Washington stringer to see if you had time today to answer the three questions listed above. They said it should not take more than five minutes. Do you want to talk to them?

Please advise. Jerry

Jesse Steinberg
Burns Bureau
484-1840

*if you'll give me
the answers*

NJR see attached answers from MED.

Jerry