## Thursday, January 29, 1981

## Let-them-eat-cake mentality unjust

It has been said so often few notice

It has been said so often few notice it anymore. But when John Block, Secretary of Agriculture, aid recently that there were many "cheaters and frauds" re-ceiving food stamps, the lines for hat-tle were again being drawn around an issue that has no center. No one can deny the practice of cheating in receiving food stamps, but reducing that percentage will only be successfully accomplished by suspending the whole program. Suc-cess in that effort can only be mea-sured in units of ruthless statistics and beartless expedience. The true mark of success in our na-tional practice of public assistance in times of personal need should be the

extent of coverage provided. The more serious issue for the Sec-retary of Agriculture is the growing number of people who need assist-ance. Substituting bread for guns and mitk for bombs is very difficult in a time when war rheboric is growing more boisterous every day. THE FOOD STAMP program was begun as a pilot project in 1961 and has been our answer to domestic pow-ety-related maluntrition since then. The authority for the current food stamp program ends in September of this year. Congress will have to write new munity.

this year. Congress will have to write new legislation and settle a \$1 billion defi-cit in the current program. It will not be an easy task.

Heavy criticism will be leveled against the "cheaters and frauds" in the current program. Statistics will be marshalled in impressive form to illustrate the disregard of many for the basic trust we need to live in com-munity

Large households with more than Large households with more than the maximum allowable income; col-lege students from wealthy homes; single-parent families buying dog food, et al., will be cited as examples of basic corruption. For many, justice will be the succesful exposure of all those who have violated the conditions of public assistance in times of personal need. And whatever binds our country to-

And whatever binds our country to-gether will be increasingly suspect,

for the more vigorously we seek out the cheaters and frauds the more we begin to doubt all who receive it. The

for the more vigorously we seek out the cheaters and frauds the more we begin to doubt all who receive it. The linal scene of that scenario will be a type of justice that destroys life in-stead of preserving it. FOR OTHERS, justice will be the serving of those who have been un-able to stretch their incomes from one inflationary percentage point to the next. It is unjust and unfair to as-sume that an increase in the unem-ployment rate created an additional million lary percentage of the unemployed represents the sud-den turning of loafers into industrious



TO SATISFY both concepts of jus-tice we will need a legal definition of eligibility that is equal to the moral definition of the needy.

definition of the needy. We will need to be inclusive in our sharing so that human dignity is not destroyed. We will need to be more sensitive to the delicate balance be-tween need and greed and recognize the capacity for greed in all humani-

ty. We will need to be creative in changing our economy so that pover-ty will be actually reduced, not mere-ly reported in a new manner. The food stamp program has pro-vided nutritional assistance to needy people, and it needs to be continued. It deserves more attention than worn clubbe

Butters cilches. By March 15, the first budget rec-ommendation will be made in the House and Senate Agriculture and Appropriations Committees and by Sept. 15 the budget will be deter-mined for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, 1981.

## Your Invitation to Worship

