

How Would You Fare On Welfare?

By MARGARET MILLER
Women's Editor

How would you get along on welfare?
Could your family manage, even at the barest subsistence level, on the dollar-a-day-per-person that for welfare recipients must cover everything but rent and utilities?
And if you do get by, what does it do to you as a person. As a family?

QUESTIONS like these came up in the course of a unit on poverty undertaken by the adult study class of St. Paul Presbyterian Church of Livonia.
And eight families in the church concluded they could best get the answers by actually "going on welfare." To do so, they played a "game" called Welfare Monopoly that has been devised by the Citizens for Welfare Reform in Detroit.

The game requires that for a week each family spend only the allotted \$1 for each member each day.

For good measure, the reform group threw in some extra frustrations that commonly beset welfare recipients.

"I NEVER THOUGHT so much about food in my life," was Mrs. Edna Manns' comment at the end of the long week.
Mrs. Manns, who heads the adult study group, planned welfare meals for herself, her husband, Elwood, and their 19-year-old son, Dickson. They live in Livonia.

Also reporting here are Mrs. Irene O'Neil, a widow who lives in Redford Township, and Mrs. Lydia Mayo, also of Redford Township, whose family includes husband Ray and two children, Bill, 9, and Nancy, 5.

Others who joined in the experiment were the Del Irvin family of Livonia, whose family includes two children and a married daughter and granddaughter; Mrs. Helen Jeter and her four children; Mrs. Joy Lanzky and her three, all of Redford Township; Mrs. Betty McKoon, a Detroit widow, and Mrs. and Mr. James Atkinson of Birmingham and their three children.

MRS. MANNS reported that at the end of the week she had 10 cents left and some chili for dinner. She figured it wasn't going to be much of a meal.

"I lived through the depression," she said. "But then everyone was involved. This was a matter of feeling hungry while steaks were being cooked next door."
"And if real welfare recipients don't have steak in the neighborhood, they certainly are exposed everywhere to pictures of affluence."

Mrs. Manns said she bought ground beef and chicken and managed several casserole-type meals. "But I just about cut out desserts, one package of cookies and a carton of ice milk, and we just couldn't afford any snacks," she added.

"My son just loves olives, and of course I didn't buy any of those, but he stayed away from the ones in the refrigerator all week."

She said she allowed only a dollar for assorted non-food items like napkins, paper towels, hair spray and deodorant, and was sure that wasn't enough.

"BUT IF you were on welfare you probably wouldn't buy things like paper towels at all," put in Mrs. O'Neil. Detailed lists of every tiny expenditure showed what happened to Mrs. O'Neil's meager \$7 for the week.

"I tried to really put myself in the place of a woman alone on welfare," she said. "I do live alone, and I don't drive, so I felt my experiment could be quite realistic."
"I shopped at the supermarket nearest my home. I understand the prices were a little lower at another a couple of miles away, but that was too far to go and carry groceries home."

"I allowed for the staples I had at home. And the \$7 would buy only one kind of meat—hamburger—and some cheese and eggs. I'll be so glad to get back to a little variety in my meals."

Mrs. O'Neil said she wound up with 17 cents.
"But I only counted one telephone call, and I thought later it should have been two, so I guess I wouldn't have had enough left to take a bus to church on Sunday," she said.

LYDIA MAYO said she and her husband had previously made plans to take their young sons to the Cranbrook planetarium the Sunday they started their experiment.

"So we went ahead with the outing, just to see if such things would be possible for welfare families. We also bought a bottle of cheap wine, and I found some bar-

gain root beer for the children."
"But I was out of money before the end of the week, so those things really aren't possible."

JUST A FEW of the frustrations can look like mountains for welfare recipients came into the experiment with the "problems" set forth by the Citizens for Welfare Reform.

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"She told me to get three estimates for repairing it and bring them to the welfare office," she said.

"Why, these days you're lucky to find even one plumber who will come and make an estimate. And all those telephone calls and getting to the office take money out of the food budget. There must be a better way."

Mrs. O'Neil's problem situation was stated thus:

"You are the mother of four children. Recently your sister's husband left her, so she and her two children moved here from the South. Your sister went to the welfare office and was given an appointment to make an application for welfare in two weeks. In the meantime, she and her children have moved in with you and you must now feed three extra people with the money you receive."

The solution suggested to that one, Mrs. O'Neil reported was to be at 640 Temple in Detroit at 8 a.m. on a



EDNA MANNS -- "I never thought so much about food in my life. We had to cut out all snacks and most dessert. I began to know what hunger pangs are. And when I washed, I allowed for the money to run the hand-dryer machines, but I forgot to include soap. I guess I'd have had to steal that."



IRENE O'NEIL -- "I'm so glad to be off hamburger. I counted aspirin and toothpaste, but forgot until the end of the week that I was taking a vitamin pill every day. I didn't have enough money left to take a bus to church on Sunday."

m. m. memos

January sales provide me with a great deal of entertainment. I have to admit I can't resist a bargain.

To start things off after Christmas this year, I bought a pair of shoes at a little over half price.

There was another pair I felt very noble about leaving on the rack. But a week or so later my nobility collapsed and I returned to the store. The shoes not only were still there, but they had been reduced two dollars more. January at its best!

But I felt my real bargain of the season was a handbag -- just the color I had been looking for and much reduced. I made sure it was big enough to hold the equipment I carry and handed over my money.

"It looks like a binocular case," commented my 12-year-old.

Even I had to admit there was a certain similarity, and she wasn't alone in her judgment.

"Where did you get the binoculars?" asked the man of our house as I prepared to go out to dinner with him.

That was a purse, I pointed out, and truly a rare bargain -- marked down three times and to less than half price.

"That," he retorted, "is because they took out the binoculars."

Oh well, January's about over. Maybe in the August sales...

-- Margaret Miller



LYDIA MAYO -- "You are so conscious of the things you can't do, but you can't really know what it's like to live on welfare all the time. Many who do don't have the education to shop for the best values. And we can't possibly know their hopelessness."

After Continental Breakfast Morning Theater Is Set

A continental breakfast and theater party--perhaps a first in this area--will be sponsored by the Plymouth Women's Club Wednesday, Feb. 10.

The benefit, annually put on by new members of the organization, this year will feature breakfast in the Plymouth Masonic Temple at 9:30 a.m. and an exclusive morning showing of the Oscar-winning film "Oliver" in the Penn Theater about 10:30 a.m.

Tickets are \$2.50 and may be purchased by calling Mrs. John Wilson, ticket chairman, 453-3652.

Proceeds from the club benefit each year are given to several charities, including the Loch Rio home for girls in Belleville, the Plymouth Community Fund and the Plymouth State Home and Training School.

Mrs. Thomas Mullen, chairman, said all women in the area are invited to attend the event. The special showing was arranged through the cooperation of Margaret Wilson, owner of the theater.

Several prizes will be awarded as part of the morning's activities. The masonic temple is located at Penniman and Union and the theater is two doors away.



BENEFIT PREPARATION -- Making decorations for the continental breakfast and theater party planned by the Plymouth Women's Club Feb. 10 are Mrs. John Wilson, in front, and, in back, Mrs. C.A. Windsor, Mrs. Thomas Mullen and Mrs. Kenneth Merrill. (Observer photo by Bob Woodring)



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