

EDITORIAL

Stealing from Children

Public officials are breaking the law and, as a result, more than 4 million needy American school children go hungry every day.

At issue is the National School Lunch Program and the manner in which it is administered in school districts across the nation.

The problem, at best, is caused by officials who just do not care, and, at worst, by those who do not believe that poor children should receive what they are entitled to under the law.

The law is clear. In 1964, Congress enacted the National School Lunch Act to "safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's children." Since then, other measures have been passed to insure that poor children are not excluded. As recently as last spring, Congress amended the Act to say that every needy child attending schools receiving federal lunch money "shall receive" a lunch free or at a reduced price.

The National School Lunch Program is operated at the federal level by the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). An indication of USDA's concern about feeding children may be seen in the fact that it took the Department nearly four months to write regulations to implement the new legislation passed in the spring.

In each state, the program is run by the Education Department through a program director. Each school district also has a school food service director. In many schools, the principal runs the program. It is a step-child of the educational system, despite the opinion of such leading child psychologists as Bruno Bettelheim that hungry children tend to be anti-social and have difficulty learning.

"How one is being fed and how one eats have a larger impact on the personality than any other human experience," Bettelheim says, while school officials continue to ignore or violate the law with impunity. The situation is as bad in the North as in the South.

The program has always benefited the children of middle class families, where the federal subsidies for free and reduced price lunches are used to hold down the cost of the meal to affluent youngsters. Hot lunches often are provided in newer schools in middle class areas, while inner-city schools are by-passed. In general, ghetto schools are older and lack adequate serving facilities. Officials, either through lack of concern or imagination, are unwilling to experiment with technological innovations that could bring hot lunches to hungry needy children.

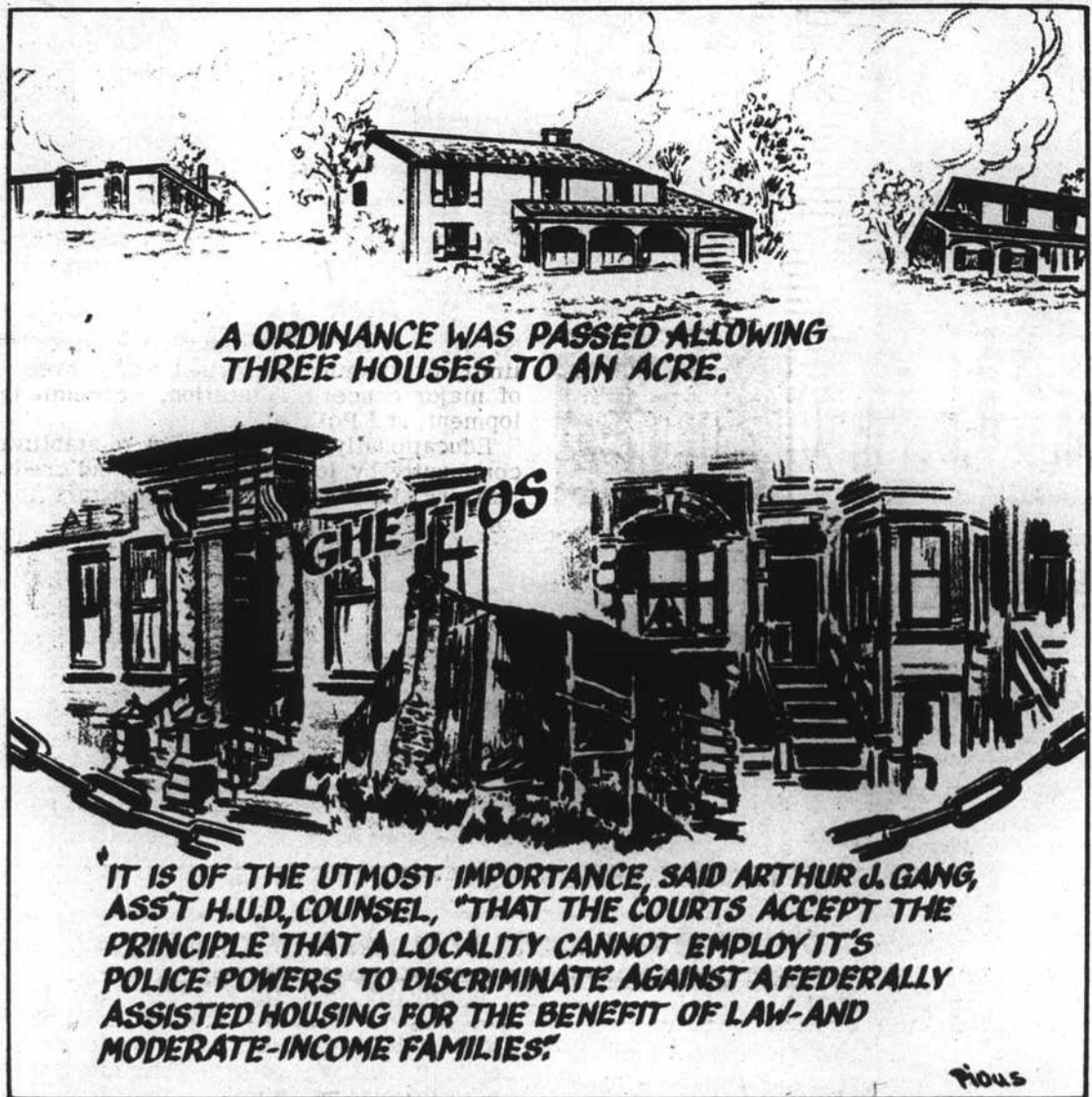
Where free or reduced prices lunches are provided children, flagrant abuses of the law are reported. The most common is discrimination. Anti-hunger workers estimate that 75 per cent of the children receiving free or reduced price meals are stigmatized by school practices. Dr. Bettelheim said, "Eating and being fed are intimately connected with our deepest feelings. They are the most basic interactions between human beings, on which rest all later evaluations of ourself, of the world and of our relationship to it."

An application form in Eden, North Carolina, begins with this statement: "There is no such thing as a free lunch! Some one must pay for every lunch served." The questions that follow are more complicated and detailed than those for a Diner's or American Express card. The names of two character witnesses are required.

The law: "Discourage the use of long detailed formal application forms. Simple statements of family income, family size plus hardship reasons should be acceptable without forms involving long-winded and irrelevant questions."

How do school administrators rationalize their practices? The response of one superintendent is typical. When it was pointed out that schools in Lincoln, Nebraska were breaking the law in the administration of the lunch program. Superintendent John Prasch replied, "We're not smart enough to figure out how to obey that law."

Challenging "White Dominance" In The Suburbs...?



A ORDNANCE WAS PASSED ALLOWING THREE HOUSES TO AN ACRE.

IT IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE, SAID ARTHUR J. GANG, ASST. H.U.D. COUNSEL, "THAT THE COURTS ACCEPT THE PRINCIPLE THAT A LOCALITY CANNOT EMPLOY ITS POLICE POWERS TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST A FEDERALLY ASSISTED HOUSING FOR THE BENEFIT OF LAW-AND MODERATE-INCOME FAMILIES."

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Things You Should Know

PETER SALEM...



THE EX-SLAVE HERO OF THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL, OF WHOM DANIEL WEBSTER SAID: "THE SHOT OF SALEM FLASHED ACROSS THE SUN OF VICTORY!"

DURING THE WHOLE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, A TOTAL OF NEARLY 5,000 NEGROES SERVED VALIANTLY AND MANY WERE REWARDED WITH RELEASE FROM SLAVERY!

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A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER (Published every Thursday) DEDICATED TO THE INTERESTS AND ASPIRATIONS FOR A BETTER LIFE FOR NEGRO CITIZENS OF THE STATE OF NEVADA

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EDITORIAL, ADVERTISING & CIRCULATION OFFICES

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North Las Vegas, Nevada 89030 • Telephone: 649-3818

ADVERTISING RATES FURNISHED UPON REQUEST

Price per copy - 15¢ • One year - 7.50 • Two years - 12.50

(Application for 2nd Class Mailing Permit pending at Las Vegas, Nevada)

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