

and community service among the boys of this country. Troop 135 of Sacred Heart Parish has built a reputation for providing the youth of the community with the leadership skills needed to be successful in today's society. Boy Scouts of America provides good, solid role models for the youth of our Nation and teaches them to be community minded. In this organization, they learn valuable skills that will serve them for a lifetime. I am proud to have such an outstanding Boy Scout troop here in the Granite State. Congratulations on reaching this tremendous milestone.

THE QUALITY OF MERCY

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask that an excellent article about welfare, "The Quality of Mercy", by James McQueeney, be printed in the RECORD.

Mr. President, I had the good fortune of benefiting from Jim McQueeney's competence and compassion when he served as my press secretary several years ago. These same qualities are evident in his article, which is an eloquent statement about what it means to be on welfare, and what the welfare reform bill will mean for real people.

I urge all my colleagues to read the article.

The article follows:

[From the New Jersey Monthly, July 1995]

THE QUALITY OF MERCY—MANY NEW JERSEYANS BELIEVE THAT WELFARE IS A WASTE. ONE MAN—NOW A SUCCESSFUL EXECUTIVE—WHO'S LIVED ON IT DISAGREES

(By James McQueeney)

I'm not a member of any obvious minority group (being the son of an Irish immigrant no longer counts), although these days I might qualify as out of the mainstream because I am a Democrat. My views on welfare seem to place me even more squarely in the minority. And I am very concerned about what we as a society are saying and doing about that issue.

We in New Jersey, the second richest state in the nation, are in the best position possible to do something about poverty and welfare reform, yet we're going about it with the worst possible attitude. The very success of New Jersey's post-war suburbanization has fueled what some pollsters call the Drawbridge Mentality—the mindset of people who find their castle and pull up the drawbridge on everybody and everything else. And who in suburbia actually lives near someone in poverty or on welfare? C'mon, I mean really knows them. By face. By name.

I do. I was one of them. So I've always been aware of poverty slights, and they're on the increase. I've cringed at a "progressive" suggestion by a prominent New Jersey business leader who told me he wants to help the poor "get off their asses." As if these people wake up every morning looking for ways to make themselves poorer. Or the Democratic politician who was trying to rationalize reforming welfare by not extending benefits to additional children of welfare mothers. As if the child had a choice of mother and neighborhood.

As someone who has lived at the extreme ends of the economic spectrum in New Jersey, I know firsthand the frightening reality of life in poverty. I grew up on welfare, in a

well-off town in Bergen County, one of the wealthiest counties in the state. I worked my way up through the ranks of New Jersey's largest newspaper, covering every county and the statehouse in Trenton, and eventually I became the paper's Washington bureau chief. Later, I was a television reporter for New Jersey Network, and I was the spokesman for one of our United States senators. I am now the president and an owner of a multimillion dollar company.

I point this out only to emphasize that I cobbled together a professional life after starting out poor—and on welfare—in New Jersey. And now, a day hardly goes by without a personal incident or a public headline reminding me how we're making it harder in New Jersey for the disadvantaged to follow a similar path of opportunity. And that upsets me.

Several months ago, I was at Menlo Park Mall conducting voter interviews with a camera team for a weekly political commentary I do for NJN. Person after person in these opulent surroundings railed against big government. The phrase "welfare cheats" was usually the caboose on their long trains of lament, mostly about the economy.

As I stood before them, I reverted to a habit I've had since poverty. I looked at the shoes of the people I was talking to. Why? Probably because my four brothers and I thought good shoes were the province of "rich people." Our "school shoes" were worn only to school and Mass, and they had to last until they literally disintegrated on our feet. I can still recall going into town to a business that had an industrial staple gun, so I could either secure the flapping soles or repatch the holes with wads of oilcloth stapled from the inside so no one would notice.

Instinctively, my gaze fell upon the shoes of the people complaining about things being so bad economically in New Jersey. Without exception, they were wearing designer shoes—those kinds of sneakers that salespeople bring to you so delicately you'd think they were explosives, or those spiffy Rockport walking shoes. I was so amazed by those walking shoes that I was compelled to go into a shoe store and price them. One hundred and twenty dollars! On sale!

With those kinds of shoes on their feet, they're feeling that much anger? I thought. And about the economy? They're not complaining about what they don't have. They're complaining that they don't have enough. Has poverty become so trivialized that the New Downtrodden are those who can't afford Rockports?

Unfortunately, it looks like it. I only wish that some of these people could have learned the lessons of poverty the way I did—through experience. Like the time I couldn't tell my teacher I didn't have \$1.50 for a science magazine subscription because I'd be revealing that I was on welfare in a rich town. Instead, I always said I forgot the money. He marked me up as a wise-guy department case, which helped drive my grades down.

Some teachers ridiculed my scraggly shoes in front of classmates, unthinkingly viewing them as an issue of cleanliness rather than pennilessness.

On one free field trip (I stayed behind in study hall for the paid ones), I borrowed a camera from a classmate on the bus to take a picture of some mundane highway bridge that crossed the Passaic River, about ten miles from home. They all had a riotous laugh when they found out I'd never been this far from home because we never had a car.

And, yes, we were forced to "cheat" on welfare, too. The "welfare lady" visited the house at pre-arranged times to make sure we weren't buying things that would indicate alternative incomes of some kind. That

would be cheating the taxpayer. I had to hide any evidence of the prosperity I was enjoying from my paper route—even the household essentials we bought with the money I earned. My brothers' bikes, bought second-hand, had to be hidden before the visits.

What got us into this predicament? My father lost his job. Does it become a more acceptable welfare story when I say it was because he contracted terminal lung cancer and took six years to die? As opposed to being a victim of economic cancer?

I won't insult victims of poverty or families on welfare by fully equating my time on welfare, or being poor and white in suburbia in the sixties, with the problems they are facing now. The problems now are worse, meaner. And bleaker.

From my experience, and in discussions with people who lived or live in similar circumstances, there is one profound misunderstanding that policymakers and the public have about poverty: You do not choose it; by and large, it chooses you.

The Democratic party meant to do well when it stitched together the welfare safety net during the Depression. And welfare worked well enough for a while. But as time passed, we didn't have the political common sense to stop sewing when it wasn't working well enough. We do need to come up with something else.

But the latest plan being bandied about, the Contract With America welfare-reform proposal, really boils down to turning the program back to the states with guidelines about cutting off benefits to the needy tomorrow, while declaring victory today. The reason that this reform plan won't work is that you can cut spending all you want, but the same mothers and children will have the same food and sheltering needs at roughly the same cost come the end of the day—no matter how you cook the books or serve the baloney. And, yes, there will always be some lumpen layabouts or drug-fried fools who will rip off the system for dollars at the margins, get all the headlines, and jump-start another sorry cycle of retribution against the truly poor and needy.

Part of the problem is that Congress, and state legislatures, are overstocked with affluent lawyers, professionals, and full-time politicians who are more than able and willing to impart their professional experiences on tort reform, health care, or the next day's news cycle. I know it's not fair, but I've seen what these politicians drive to work and leave in the parking lots outside the Congress and the state capital. Nobody's holding the mufflers of those cars together with hanger wire, I can assure you.

All of this seems so fresh, so important to me, because I know that welfare made it possible for me to go as far as I have. I still have my family's welfare application, signed by both my parents, for my sons to see. I tell them to remember it's nothing to be ashamed about. To the contrary, it was a safety net that scooped up seven people from our family, and the investment in us let us re-invest our lives—and our taxes—in America.

The shame would come from not extending our hands to someone else. But the real shame is that that could become a minority view in a state like New Jersey. ●

SALUTE TO MARY MOORMAN
RYAN CALDWELL AND ANN HARDIN GRIMES

● Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, the last 2 weeks have been filled with triumphs and struggles for United States athletes competing in the Centennial Olympics in Atlanta. We have all