

# 1001 ways to cook crap *by a welfare mother*

Reprinted from Community Concern, the Just Society Movement newspaper.

In all the low-income publications I come across I see either a recipe column or mention of some groups of ladies forming to stretch the food dollar. Maybe some of you have wondered why you've never seen a wiener or hamburger mentioned by the Just Society Movement in our Welfare Rights mag., or Community Concern.

For many years people have tried to say the problem with poor people is they don't know how to budget properly. It's been said so often that even some poor people believe it and seem to be out to prove to the world that they aren't "those kind of poor people". They are different, better, smarter, more deserving. So a lot of otherwise intelligent people have their energies diverted into safe little projects that take the heat off the real problems.

Why can't you ladies leave it to the home economists? I'm sure they sincerely think they're doing a great service with their ridiculous columns of low-income recipes. I appreciate the way they always tell you the cost of one serving is 14-3/4 cents. They have yet to tell me where to buy 17-1/3 cents worth of cheese for grating, or how I get hold of a roast of beef

to have leftover chunks of beef. Nowhere has any 'expert' told me how to buy food when half my rent has to come out of the food budget, or I need to take food money to buy drugs for a sick child.

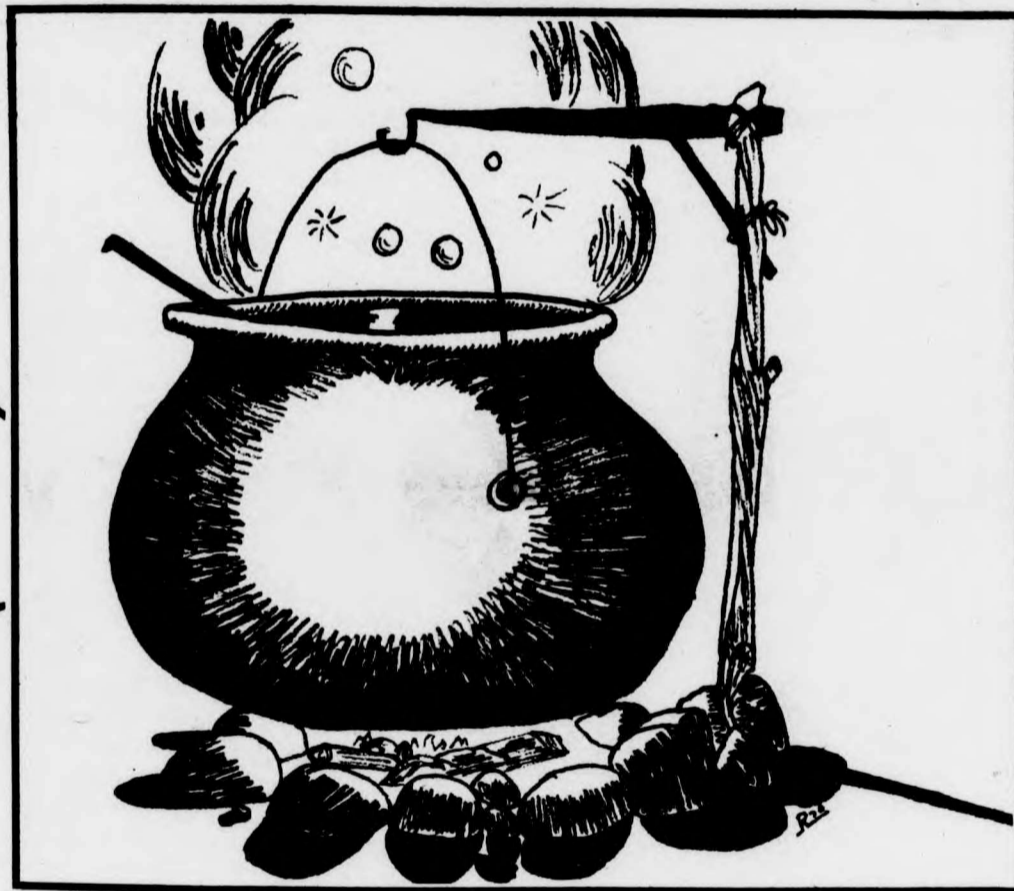
How about food stores like Food-City who refuse to cash welfare cheques unless you spend what they consider to be one week's groceries and in reality can be as much as 3/4 of your monthly allowance for food. Even if you had a car to take the stuff home or had sufficient freezer or storage space, you still would have to hang on to some money in case of some emergency through the month. I could go on and on but it's not necessary. After all, we know the 'experts' know bugger all about poverty.

I've seen people laugh when we talk about hunger in Canada — hunger in Toronto. They look at some poor fat woman and say "She doesn't look very hungry." Well, isn't that bright! Maybe she loves salads, but they are expensive for welfare budgets. The kids need something that sticks in their bellies. The people who laugh have never known what it does to your guts to hear your child crying for food and have nothing to give him. So we eat bread, macaroni and potatoes. If we can buy meat at all, it's cheap and has a lot of fat. We feed our children first and then, yes, we eat all the leftovers, because we can't stand to waste food. That fat, my friend, is the fat of poverty.

The truth is that we are the best financial jugglers around. Even John Anderson, the commissioner of welfare for the city of Toronto, has admitted that. Our food budgets don't come anywhere near amounts quoted in different guides as being the minimum necessary.

Last fall the Dept. of National Health and Welfare expressed with surprise the fact that there is malnutrition in Canada. The Hon. John Munro said at the time they'd have a four year study on it. Another example of responsible government! We of the Just Society Movement are sick of the kind of political structures that ignore people's needs. We are sick of an economic system that destroys many for the sake of a few. The wealth and the power in this country are held by less than 10% of the population.

As long as we spend our energies trying to be interior decorators in slums struggling to bring up our own family on less money than a foster parent gets, aspiring to be connoisseurs of trash, we will remain powerless. They'll have more studies concerning our problems with the attitude that we are the problem. As long as they study poverty, they don't have to ask the right questions. In that way, there's no danger they will come up with the right answers. Poverty is profitable to some people. When will they study wealth in this country?



## STONE SOUP

Adapted from MARSHA BROWN

Three travellers trudged down a road in a strange country. Besides being tired, they were hungry. In fact, they had eaten nothing for two days.

"How I would like a good dinner tonight," said the first.

"And a bed to sleep in," said the second.

"But all that is impossible," said the third. "We must march on."

On they marched. Suddenly, ahead of them they saw the lights of a village.

"Maybe we'll find a bite to eat there," said the first.

"And a loft to sleep in," said the second.

"No harm in asking," said the third.

Now the peasants of that place feared strangers. When they heard that three travellers were coming down the road, they talked among themselves.

"Here come three travellers. They are always hungry, but we have little enough for ourselves." And they hurried to hide their food.

The travellers stopped first at the house of Paul and Francoise.

"Good evening to you," they said. "Could you spare a bit of food for three hungry travellers?"

"We have had no food for ourselves for three days," said Paul. Francoise made a sad face. "It has been a poor harvest."

So it went all through the village. Not a peasant had any food to give away. They all had good reasons. One family had used the grain for feed. Another had an old sick father to care for. All had too many mouths to fill.

The villagers stood in the street and sighed. They looked as hungry as they could.

The three travellers talked together.

Then the first traveller called out, "Good people! We are three hungry travellers in a strange land. We have asked you for food and you have none. Well then, we'll have to make stone soup."

The peasants stared. Stone soup? That would be

something to know about.

"First we'll need a large iron pot," the travellers said.

The peasants brought the largest pot they could find. How else to cook enough?

"That's none too large," said the travellers. "But it will do. And now, water to fill it and a fire to heat it."

A fire was built on the village square and the pot was set to boil.

"And now, if you please, three round smooth stones."

Those were easy enough to find.

The peasants' eyes grew round as they watched the travellers drop the stones into the pot.

"Any soup needs salt and pepper," said the travellers as they began to stir.

Children ran to fetch salt and pepper.

"Stones like these generally make good soup. But oh, if there were carrots, it would be much better."

"Why, I think I have a carrot or two," said Francoise, and off she ran.

She came back with her apron full of carrots from the bin beneath the red quilt.

"A good stone soup should have cabbage," said the travellers as they sliced the carrots into the pot. "But no use asking for what you don't have."

"I think I could find a cabbage somewhere," said Marie, and she hurried home. Back she came with three cabbages from the cupboard under the bed.

"If only we had a bit of beef and a few potatoes, this soup would be good enough for a rich man's table."

The peasants thought that over. They remembered their potatoes and the sides of beef hanging in the cellars. They ran to fetch them.

A rich man's soup — and all from a few stones. It seemed like magic!

"Ah," sighed the travellers as they stirred in the beef and potatoes, "if only we had a little barley and a cup of milk! This soup would be fit for the king himself. Indeed he asked for just such a soup when last he dined with us."

The peasants looked at each other. The travellers had entertained the king! Well!

"But — no use asking for what you don't have," the travellers sighed.

The peasants brought their barley from the lofts, they brought their milk from the wells. The travellers stirred the barley and milk into the steaming broth while the peasants stared.

At last the soup was ready.

"All of you shall taste," the travellers said. "But first a table must set."

Great tables were placed in the square. And all round were lighted torches.

Such a soup! How good it smelled! Truly fit for a king.

But then the peasants asked themselves, "Would not such a soup require bread — and a roast — and cider?" Soon a banquet was spread and everyone sat down to eat.

Never had there been such a feast. Never had the peasants tasted such soup. And fancy, made from stones!

They ate and drank and ate and drank. And after that they danced.

At last they were tired. Then the three travellers asked, "Is there not a loft where we could sleep?"

"Let three such wise and splendid gentlemen sleep in a loft? They must have the best beds in the village."

So the first traveller slept in the priest's house.

The second traveller slept in the baker's house.

And the third traveller slept in the mayor's house.

In the morning, the whole village gathered to give them a send-off. "Many thanks for what you have taught us," the peasants said. "We shall never go hungry, now that we know how to make soup from stones."

"Oh, it's all in knowing how," said the travellers, and off they went down the road.