

Day After Day - November 1933

By Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, November 1933, 1,2.

Summary: Contrasts society's concern for animals and sill "high society" games with the plight of those being evicted. Urges readers to petition against evictions. (DDLW #197).

A deer gets trapped on a hillside and every effort is brought to bear to rescue him from his predicament. The newspapers carry daily features.

Mrs. A. with her four children and unemployed husband living on \$1.50 a week, is trapped by economic circumstances and everyone is so indifferent that it took three or four afternoons of Mike Gunn's time to see to it that the Home Relief came to the rescue. Though Mike has enough to do with his Labor Guild over in Brooklyn, he was doing his bit as part of the Fifteenth Street Neighborhood Council.

Three little pigs are crowded into a too-small cage, the case is brought into court, the judge's findings in the case being that pigs should not be crowded the way subway riders are. And a family of eight children, mother and father, are crowded in three rooms and the consensus of opinion is that they're lucky to have that and why don't they practice birth control anyway.

One of the Home Relief workers came in the other day and was voicing just such sentiments. She was absolutely unacquainted with Catholic teaching on birth control and abortion, and we forced her to listen to a lecture on the subject which, though it may not have convinced her, at least served the purpose of toning down her propaganda among unemployed families, we hope.

A scavenger hunt is the latest game of "Society." An hilarious pastime, the New York *Times* society reporter calls it, and describes in two and one half columns the asinine procedure of several hundred society and literary figures, guests at a party at the Waldorf-Astoria, surging forth on a chase through the highways and byways of Manhattan Island. "The scavenger hunt of last night brought an enthusiastic response even from persons whose appetites for diversion are ordinarily jaded." The hunt was a search through the city streets for a "ridiculously heterogeneous list of articles."

Any morning before and after Mass and straight on through the day there is a "scavenger hunt" going on up and down Fifteenth Street outside the windows of THE CATHOLIC WORKER and through all the streets of the city. People going through garbage and ash cans to see what they can find in the way of a heterogeneous list of articles. The *Times* does not state what these things were, but probably the list was made up of something delightfully and quaintly absurd such as old shoes, bits of string, cardboard packing boxes, wire, old furniture, clothing and food.

If the several hundred guests at the Waldorf had to scavenge night after night and morning after morning, the hunt would not have such an enthusiastic response.

Teresa, aged seven, member of the Fifteenth Street Neighborhood Council, took part in her first eviction the other day. She had a cold and was staying home from school in order to keep out in the air, it being a balmy day, so she had her chance to help.

The Friday before, a Home Relief worker from 22nd Street came to the office to get aid for a woman and child who were being evicted from a decrepit flat in one of the tenements of William Horn (31 Union Square). There were five stalwart friends of The Catholic Worker in the office at the time, Harry Crimmins, Frank O'Donnell, Tom Coddington, William Walsh, and a Mr. Powers from Atlantic City who came to inquire about the work of the paper and stayed to help.

Understanding that the eviction was at three in the afternoon, we sallied forth, but when we got there, the landlord's agent had called off his men, expecting us to do the job of putting the woman out, and thus saving him eighteen dollars.

We refused to move the woman's furniture until it had been brought down by the marshal. We explained to the agent that often a landlord who was unwilling to accept a Home Relief voucher offered to move the family himself, paying five dollars to a neighborhood truckman rather than eighteen to the marshal. This agent, standing sneering and scoffing by the door, refused to do anything.

"You have no sympathy for landlords, have you?" he wanted to know.

We assured him that our sympathy was rather with the weaker party. Alright then, he would call the marshal! The eviction would be the following Monday then, at three o'clock.

It was hard to understand his unwillingness to have the poor woman moved. It was as though he delighted in the idea of heaping humiliation on her.

Monday came, and the relief worker hastened around to the office, to tell us that the marshal was about to arrive, though it was only one, not three in the afternoon. Only Harry Crimmins, Teresa, Dorothy Weston and I were in the office, so leaving Dorothy to mind the office, the three of us sallied out.

Several police and huskies were standing at the door of the tenement to greet what they thought was going to be a delegation of Communists, only to meet instead seven-year-old Teresa, Harry Crimmins and me. They dissolved into thin air. (It is a wonder they wouldn't stay and help us.)

Teresa carried toys, pieces of the baby's crib, and Harry Crimmins and I managed the rest. The Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart, a community of nuns who run a day nursery and do visiting work in the neighborhood promised to keep an eye on our evicted friend—she is a Protestant—taking charge of her two-year-old child while she works as a dishwasher for seven a week.

This is only one of the dozen eviction cases we have had in the last month. We have moved Jews, Protestants, and Catholics. A German livery stable man

loaned us his horse and wagon to move a Jewish neighbor. Jews, Protestants and Catholics have helped us by contributing clothes, furniture and their services.

We call our readers' attention to the petition published in this issue against evictions which we urge you to clip out, attach to a sheet of paper and send back filled with the signatures of men, women and children who protest against this injustice.