

The society continues the work of so many who came to this country as immigrants seeking freedom and a new life in America. But the bonds of kinship and of nationality were often the only protections in a society where intolerance and discrimination was the more likely welcome.

Having done so much over the past 60 years, the Italian Hospital Society has embarked on a new mission to create an Italian Home for the Aged as an independent assisted living facility where Italian-Americans and all elderly and infirm can receive the finest assistance. As they note in their mission statement: "Unfortunately many of our own parents and grandparents have suffered isolation, depression and feelings of frustration due to cultural and language barriers. It is the mission of the Italian Hospital Society to ameliorate this difficult situation by providing a supervised facility that would be comforting and familiar to our aged community while providing for the physical as well as psychological welfare of these individuals."

Mr. President, I ask to share with our colleagues the joy I have as son of one of the society's honorees and thank them for all the work that they do as a society and for the honors and respect they show toward their four honorees. They and the society inspire us all.●

CONFIRMATION OF JUDGE WILLIAM P. GREENE, JR., AS ASSOCIATE JUDGE, U.S. COURT OF VETERANS APPEALS

● Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I want to express my enormous delight that Judge William P. Greene, Jr., was recently confirmed for the position of associate judge for the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals. Judge Greene brings to this job a lifetime of experience in the armed services and the law, and I believe President Clinton made an excellent choice in nominating him for this position.

Bill is extremely qualified to serve on the court. After graduating from Howard University School of Law in 1968, he joined the U.S. Army, where he proudly served for 25 years. Bill was an officer in the U.S. Army Judge Advocates Group Corps, and earned the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, and Army Commendation Medal more than once.

Since 1993, Bill has served as an immigration judge for the Department of Justice in Baltimore. His leadership skills and ability to make clear, decisive, and just decisions have been well tried—and well proven.

In addition to his many other fine attributes, Bill has another that makes me especially proud of him—he is a native West Virginian. Bill was born in Bluefield, WV, and lived there until he was 10. He grew up in a military family and although they moved around to many different places, Bill always considered West Virginia home, and re-

turned to West Virginia to attend West Virginia State College.

Bill's father was a veteran of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, and was awarded the Silver Star for valor. So it is no surprise to me that Bill possesses an enormous sense of patriotism and pride in his country. The learning experience of growing up in a military family, combined with the experience of his own military career, will be enormously helpful to him in the job that lies ahead.

Everyone who has worked with me on the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs knows that I have long been a supporter of the court, so you can be sure that the quality of those who serve there is important to me. I am confident that Judge Greene will bring to the court the wisdom, judgment, and sensitivity so necessary for the court's vital work. In doing so, he will serve both our country and his fellow veterans well.●

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY OPERATION ON TEMPORARY SHELTER

● Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, on September 11, 1997, the Community on Temporary Shelter [COTS] held its annual meeting in Burlington, VT. The keynote speaker was Rita Markley, the director of COTS. Through her hard work and dedication to the needs of the homeless in Vermont stands as a glowing example of the value of community service. Her efforts have made a tremendous difference in the fight to end homelessness. It gives me great pleasure to submit, for the RECORD, the text of her remarks.

The text of the remarks follows:

[Sept. 11, 1997]

COMMITTEE ON TEMPORARY SHELTER ANNUAL MEETING—WHERE ARE WE NOW

(By Rita Markley)

Good morning and welcome to our annual meeting and volunteer recognition. This is the day when we thank all of you for giving your support to COTS. It's the time when we reflect on what that contribution means and why it matters.

I think it's too easy these days to forget that there was a time in this country, just 20-25 years ago, when being poor did not mean being homeless. There was a time when retail clerks, gas station attendants, waitresses could afford to pay for their rent and their groceries. Sometimes they even had enough left over for a Saturday afternoon movie. There was a time when the mentally ill were not left to wander America's streets without housing or services. And there was a time, just 15 years ago, when this community did not need a place like COTS because homelessness was something that only happened in big cities.

There have been enormous economic and social changes during the past 20 years that have displaced and uprooted millions of lives. Across the country and here in Vermont, the number of families and individuals without housing has increased tenfold during the past decade. Not since the Great Depression have there been so many homeless Americans. During the 1980's more than half a million units of low income housing were lost every year to condo conversion,

arson and demolition. That rate of loss has been even higher during the 1990's. In Chittenden County, rents increased twice as fast as average income during the 80's. Not surprisingly, we now live in a time when homelessness has become so pervasive, so endemic, that we've all but forgotten that it was not always this way. One of my greatest fears is that we will come to accept that this is the way it must be.

It seems impossible that it was less than 20 years ago that we first began to see vast numbers of families all over this country sleeping in abandoned buildings or huddled in doorways because they couldn't afford a home. Back then, we were deeply shaken by the image of small children doing their homework by flashlight in the backseat of cars, the idea of anyone sleeping under cardboard boxes in public parks was astonishing. Our hearts were broken by newspaper stories of entire families scouring through trash dumpsters for scraps of food.

In 1997 the problem of homelessness in America remains one of our greatest challenges and yet we hear little or nothing about this issue in the national media. It's as if seeing those anguished images year after year has become so routine that we no longer see them at all. A few months ago my own sister told me that she was tired of seeing the homeless everywhere she went, that she couldn't look at their faces anymore because there were just too many of them, and it made her feel too sad. Either she forgot what I do every day or she wanted me to remind her that turning away from her own compassion means turning away from her humanity. My sister's reaction, though, is not uncommon. The homeless are increasingly invisible, untouchable. And they know it, they feel the distancing every time someone passes them by on the street without looking into their eyes. Even children living in desperate poverty know that they are regarded differently than cleaner, better dressed children. Here's a quote from a 15 year old girl that describes their experience poignantly:

"It's not like being in jail. It's more like being hidden. It's as if you have been put in a garage somewhere, where, if they don't have room for something but aren't sure if they should throw it out, they put it there in the garage where they don't need to think of it again. That's what it's like." (Kozol interview tapes)

Since the mid-1980's there has been a growing inclination to ignore, conceal and even punish those without homes. Many people in this country have moved from pity to impatience to outright contempt for the homeless.

In Fort Lauderdale, FL a city councilor proposed spraying trash containers with rat poison to discourage foraging by homeless families. "The way to get rid of vermin," he said, "is to cut off their food supply." (1986) In Santa Barbara, California grocers have sprinkled bleach on food discarded in their dumpsters.

In Chicago a homeless man was set ablaze while sleeping on a bench early one December morning. Rush hour commuters passed his charred body and possessions for four hours before anyone called the police.

In the first four months of 1992, 26 homeless people were set on fire while they were sleeping in New York City.

Who are these faceless, forsaken people that they would provoke such hateful acts? They are the poorest and most vulnerable members of our society: they are the elderly and families with children, they are Korean and Vietnam war veterans, they are the mentally ill who were left to fend for themselves on city streets, they are women and children fleeing from violence. I wonder