

Matron to Ask DeGaulle for Aid In Battle for Welfare Clothing: Ready ...

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Matron to Ask DeGaulle for Aid In Battle for Welfare Clothing Ready to Sell Blood to Buy Shoes for Daughter

By LAWRENCE H. GELLER
"If the State Legislature doesn't provide us with more funds for clothing, I'm going to write to President Charles DeGaulle and ask for some foreign aid."
"This was no joke. The woman was serious as she spoke.
Just as serious as the day two weeks ago when she went to the Episcopal Hospital Blood Center to sell her blood in order to buy shoes for her little girl.
She is Mrs. Mickie McCullough, welfare recipient and treasurer of

the Philadelphia Welfare Rights Organization (WRO).
\$25.39-A-WEEK
She lives with her 7-year-old daughter, Jean, and receives a total of \$37 every two weeks from the Department of Public Assistance.
It wasn't always this way. Just a few short years ago she

was living in an 11-room house, and her husband was making \$12,000 a year. But a personal tragedy struck the family and she found herself on relief.
But she was never the kind of person to look down on those who were less fortunate than herself. "I could never understand how people could get by on relief, how

they could maintain their spirit from day to day," she added quietly in the small offices of WRO at 1320 Green st.
But she understood the needs of the poor well enough to give several families any clothes she no longer wanted plus the dresses and coats her daughter outgrew.
11 GODCHILDREN

It was appreciated, too. "I wound up with 11 god-children," said Mrs. McCullough, as she excused herself while she checked some book work with a VISTA volunteer.
Several VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) workers are spending a year working with the Greater Philadelphia Council of Churches, which is serving as an advisory group to WRO.
Mickie is an attractive woman, personable and spirited. She's a bit on the plump side, something to which she readily admits.

"It wasn't always like this," she said, smiling as she took a deep breath and pulled her waist in. **GAINED 23 POUNDS**
"I wish I could get drunk some times. But I can't drink."
"Why?"
"It just doesn't make things so bad," she replied simply. "I know some welfare recipients drink and the middle-classes criticize them harshly for it. They just don't understand," she continued, shaking her head sadly. "They just don't understand."
"What do you mean?" asked her visitor.

"The doctor said I couldn't work after the nervous breakdown I had," she replied. "I could work now but this work with WRO is important for many people and somebody has to do it."
Mrs. McCullough says she first became aware of WRO and its work by attending a neighborhood meeting at the Southwark Community Association, where her daughter attended recreation classes.

"People were talking about their common problems of trying to exist on relief and I became interested."
\$75 ALLOWANCE
Her interest and energy quickly involved her in the struggle of welfare recipients to get a \$75 clothing allowance for their children and, also, to bring the welfare checks up to what the State, itself, says they should be.
WRO claims recipients only get 70 percent of a minimum standard the legislature set in 1957.

"The middle-class complains about crime and violence in the streets while they sit in their warm, snug homes with plenty to eat and the proper clothing.

"Why there isn't more crime in the streets, I'll never know," she continued as she tapped a pencil on the table.
"The young people are looking around — television, magazines, newspapers—and they see how others are living. And they are getting frustrated," she said.
"You can't stimulate people to want things and then not provide them with the means to get those things," she continued. "If they cannot get the things legally, they will get them in other ways."
She crossed her hands and leaned forward as she stated: "Society says people on relief are not good enough—look at the money we are supposed to raise children on—and then it expects them to grow up into first-class citizens."

Mrs. McCullough stopped talking for a moment. The office was empty now except for her visitor. She ran her fingers through her hair, started to say something, paused, and then . . .
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GHETTO LIVING
"It takes people's minds off the rats and roaches—the things they aren't able to give their children, the lack of heat, the exploitation by landlords, the continual boredom of ghetto living day in and day out."
She said she "had it good before," but being on relief can "drive you to drink. The living conditions are almost inhuman. Unless a person gets a breather from it once in awhile—some do it by drinking—you can go out of your mind, especially if you have no hope of things getting any better."

Mrs. Myrtle McCullough has that's what keeps her going. But until that day comes, she will keep on struggling for the best interests of all persons who have to grapple with the problems of living on relief.
While she does this, she is also saving her pennies in order to take her daughter, Jean, to see a motion picture musical downtown . . . the first one they will have seen in a long time.



AN UNIDENTIFIED youth stands on the curb right outside the front entrance of the Police Administration building as he demonstrates his sign for all passing motorists and bus passengers to see.

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