Excerpt From Our Appalachia

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"The Cruel Choice" is a sampler (pp. 323-339) of *Our Appalachia, An Oral History* edited by Laurel Shackelford and Bill Weinberg published by Hill and Wang in 1977. The editorial choice of this material dealing primarily with welfare and migration was, in the main, an arbitrary choice; but any selection from this rich and comprehensive oral history would have, of necessity, had some aspect of arbitrariness. The only favorable argument was that so much has been said and written about the issues of migration and welfare that it would be good to let those who were intimately and vitally involved with those issues speak from their experience. This they do with—what must seem to those familiar only with the Appalachian stereotype—a surprising frankness, intelligence, human understanding. But the same argument and comment could be used for the other issues and talkers in this many-faceted book; for it does present the problems and issues involved in the transition of a people and area from a simpler way of life to a more complex one as the result, primarily of outside influences—missionaries, coal speculators, railroads, industry, tourism, etc.—as told by those who experienced it or were intimately acquainted with it.

The idea of *Our Appalachia* originated with the Oral History Project at Alice Lloyd College and was completed with the cooperation of the Appalachian Oral History Project, a five-year-old, four-school consortium based at Alice Lloyd College. The other schools were Lees Junior College, Jackson, Kentucky; Appalachian State University at Boone, North Carolina; and Emory and Henry College, Emory, Virginia. The decision to use a sampler from the book rather than a formal review may be assigned to a *quirk* in the mind of the editor of *Appalachian Heritage.*

Our Appalachia is now available in hard back ($12.95) or paperback ($6.95) and may be obtained from local bookstores, the publisher, or the Alice Lloyd College Bookstore at Pippa Passes, Kentucky 41844.

THE CRUEL CHOICE

(In 1954) at thirteen, Willie (Will) Pennington took one look at the concrete jungle that was called Cincinnati and fled home to live with an aunt in Laurel County, Kentucky. His reaction was understandable because the changes he would have been called upon to make in the city were awesome indeed. In 1956 when Will finally mustered the courage to settle permanently in Cincinnati he was adding another link to the chain of kinfolks who had migrated there.

Will Pennington

My mam's sister and her husband came up about '35. When they left, they left with nothing (and) caught a bus to the city. When they came back he was driving his own car, he had a nice suit on, and he had *money*. Surely the other people were envious of him to an extent. They'd say, "If he can do it, I can do it." I don't think (possessions and money had) really mattered to the people until they got exposed to (them). When one of their own was the one who had it, and especially when that one says, "It's nice to have a dollar in your pocket instead of having nothing in your pocket" (people's attitudes began to change). Before you wasn't exposed to it, nobody had it, and I don't think it crossed their mind too much. You'd see people in town who did have things, but "Them are other folks," and they were different from us. Now, "This is one of our folks."

Today Will is a teacher and administrator at Cincinnati's Porter Junior High School and lives in a modern split-level home just north of town in Sharonville. He and his Kentucky-born wife, Ethel, are satisfied with how their lives have evolved in Ohio and they have no plans for returning to eastern Kentucky where the options are fewer and the future appears dimmer. No doubt Will's attitudes toward home were shaped by earlier experiences.

I was born in 1942 at Hooker, Kentucky, in a log cabin and (lived there) until I was in the third grade and we moved to Laurel County. You'd rent a farm and tend tobacco on halves, which meant that you got half of whatever you grew. The problem was you're dealing with six tenths of an acre of tobacco and only talking about

a cash value of a thousand dollars. Your share might be five hundred dollars; that's your cash money you can count on coming in.

(When we moved from Hooker to Laurel County, Dad) felt he could do better if he could get on a farm that had more tendable land. Money was the issue, really. Where we lived only had ten acres that you could tend with mules; the rest was just hillsides, poor land. People (had) planted and planted on it, there was no fertilizer, and (they) wore it out. That policy of farming brought about the fact that they had to turn to some other source of income later on (and) I think it might have led to one of the reasons for accepting welfare.

(When) we settled in Laurel County we rented a farm from a jailer. We were contracted to provide all the potatoes for the jail. That did give us another cash crop other than tobacco, but the problem is that you have good years and bad years with potatoes. Some years you have an abundant crop; other years they don't turn out very good at all. It gets so tough going to raise your family, especially if you're trying to farm, that (many men) back in the late forties and early fifties (began to despair and think) the thing to do was to come to the city and get a job.

(After) three or four years we still didn't have very much. Through his travels (Dad had) seen other people had a lot more than we had. He said, "Why can't I go somewhere else and acquire a job that would make more money?" (He was supposed) to come to the city, which he did, to find a job and after he got himself established come back down and get us. That never did (happen) the way it was intended. What happens, you take the mountain man (and) he comes to a big city. Well, there's a lot of vices in the city. (The same vices) might be down there but they won't be as out in the open and they don't have as much stigma tied to them if you get involved in them. We—my mom, my sister, and brother—stayed down there and I went to school at Bush until I was in the fifth grade and when the split came my mom couldn't make it. He wasn't providing support and she was working in tobacco making three dollars a day and sending three kids to school.

My mama, she didn't like the city at all, but she knew she had to work somewhere to put her kids through school and have a place to live. When she came (to Cincinnati) she stayed with the same aunt (that came in 1935) till she got a job. To show you how spendthrifty she was, she made thirty-five dollars a week; that was about twenty dollars more than she was making down home. She managed to save about a thousand dollars in a year and a half. She wanted the money in case she didn't have a job. See, back down home you'd be working in somebody's tobacco this week, but you might not be working nowhere next week.

The biggest migration of my people was in the late forties and early fifties. (First) one person goes and another person went and (finally) six out of eight on my mother's side (and) thirteen out of fifteen on my dad's side (moved to Cincinnati). They wanted to do better from what they were down there (and) it was getting to be such a task to survive. (The government) cut down on tobacco allotments on some of the farms and a lot of my relatives were renters so you only got a part of what you were growing anyway. Then if you had a bad year, you didn't have that income.

When (my mom) came up I didn't like the schools, I didn't like all the trouble I's getting into, so I went back (home). If you're used to living in the country and roaming the woods like I did, then you come up here and roam this concrete jungle, it's a totally different story. After a period of time I wanted to be with my mom, so I came up in the sixth grade and I had a lot of trouble adjusting. I went back to Bush in the seventh grade; then I came back up here again and I went to Cutter (Junior High School). I had a lot of problems at Cutter because they cap* in the inner city. They'd cap on your father, they cap on your brother, they cap on your shoes, they cap on your hair. I didn't mind all that till they'd cap on my mom. They'd say things like, "Your mom wears boots," (and I'd say), "You're not going to talk about my mom because she's the one who stuck with me." They'd start capping on me and I'd punch one of them. They'd do it again and bam! we'd wind up in the (principal's) office.

They had their days with me, there's no doubt about it. One thing that really sets you off is your personal appearance and the way you talk. Kids up here, they've got hair that comes down to the ear lobes and the duck tail bit, whereas I had a flattop and the type of Levi's I wore were not the type they wore in the city at all. Mine were loose-leg and the ones they wore were peg-leg pants. So I had to make an adjustment and that was an expense on the part of your mom. She wanted us to be accepted in the schools so she did without a lot of stuff to get us a pair of shoes, to get us a pair of pants, to get us the shirt.

I still have that problem with the language barrier. In the country instead of saying "tomato" you'd say "mater." Instead of saying "yellow" you'd say "yellar," "usens" instead of "we." We say, "Let's go over younder and see that movie"; they say, "Do you mean you want to go over there'?" I used to refuse to read out loud in class or to get up and give an oral report. (Now) my philosophy is that we've got to communicate. One person says the proper way to communicate is to say "potato," instead of "tater." If I'm talking with you and we understand each other, it doesn't matter to me what language we're using if we communicate.

You had to run with a gang if you lived up here. You couldn't live on McMicken Street and be a loner because every group of guys that ran the streets would pick on you. (If) they (knew) you belonged to this gang they wouldn't mess with you because they didn't want to mess with the gang. Any time you come out on the streets you had your own turf. You could run in this certain area and you didn't have to worry, but if you went into another gang's territory you could rest assured if they encountered you, you are going to get your head worked. Another thing, you didn't mess with another gang's women. God, if you did there'd been a mass waiting on you when you come out of school. (Gang members) didn't want to get suspended, so they'd wait till you got away from the school ground and then they'd have their (fights).

When I went to Cutter in the eighth grade the gang would have members standing at the flight of stairs and (they) had a shakedown racket: "How much money you got, man?" You had to fork it over or get your behind whipped after school. You

*"Cap" means to make fun of.

(could) go to the principal, yes, he'll take care of that one but he don't take care of the group and it's the group that was going to get you. I got tired of fighting that battle so I thought the best thing to do is join them. The guys that I teamed up with were guys that came from down home. Even though I'm from the country they don't just welcome you in. You had to prove to them that you're worthy of their gang, that you wasn't no coward, or you didn't squeal.

I could do a physical thing at that time as good or better than any of the other kids could do and that was play basketball. When I went to Bush High School we started basketball in September and played all the way to April. In a city you play basketball about three months out of the year, so I was much more highly advanced than they were and they knew it. When they'd choose up sides you know who was picked first, so I got to know them. If I didn't have that skill it would have been a much harder road. I had these faults—I talked funny, I dressed funny, and I didn't look exactly like they looked—but I could do something they couldn't do (and) things just started to jell. (By the time) I went to Taft High School I didn't have any problems because I (had) developed the personality to deal with the kind of problems that you encounter in the city.

Looking back from where I'm at now, Dad and Mom splitting (was) probably one of the better things that happened. (If they hadn't split), no doubt I'd been a farmer. (I'm) not saying there's anything wrong with farming, I just don't think there's much future as a small farmer. I've got things now that I'm sure I could have never afforded if I'd been living on a farm. My brother graduated from college and he's the office manager for Eagle Picture. (To) look at us today you'd never think (we) came from such a background.

(My mom) doesn't live in Cincinnati proper (anymore). She lives in Florence* where she (has) more open territory around her. (When) you live in the country you've got freedom: freedom to go, freedom to do. The air you breathe, the noise, the pace that you live in, all of that changes (in the city). My grandfather comes up here and he'll stay a week and that's it; he wants to be back down there even though he's living by himself and he's seventy-five years old. He just doesn't like the city. He told me:

> The city is like an anthill. You ever watch an anthill? The ants are constantly coming out of their little hole, back and forth, packing this, packing that. That's what the city reminds me of. You watch the expressway, here comes all the ants, the cars. (They) go in this building, they stay there all day and they go right back down the hill again. Most of your life is just running back and forth, punching in, punching out. Going home, read the paper, sit there and watch TV, going to sleep. That's your life and on the weekend you'll try to cram something into it.

Did your parents ever consider going on welfare as an alternative to leaving eastern Kentucky?

No. There is no way, even today, that they'll accept welfare in any form or

*Florence, Kentucky, is twelve miles south of Cincinnati.

fashion. As a matter of fact, it burns her up to go to the food market and they ask whether it's going to be cash or food stamps. When we lived on Walnut Street (in Cincinnati) there was a fellow who was as able-bodied as my mom was but he lived on welfare. He used to laugh (at her and say), "You're a fool for working. Why don't you go on welfare?" She would have made more on welfare than she would working for thirty-five dollars a week, but she wouldn't do it. She said, "What I get is going to be from me and not from somebody else." When we lived back (home) I don't remember anybody that I come in contact with that was on welfare. They shared things within the group, (but) they didn't accept things from somebody outside.

What happened to change that?

Many things. The fact that the price of things went up so drastically, the fact that the tobacco crop just doesn't provide the money they need to offset expenses. A lot of those hillsides have been planted so many years without any type of fertilizer on them they're no longer in a condition to grow anything. Another reason some people went on welfare is that they constantly (felt) like (they were) beating their head against the wall; they tried to make ends meet and couldn't.

What happened was when one person (went on welfare), he lived through the criticism and then another person joined him, and another person joined. The status of being on it—"That's a terrible thing to be on welfare"—started to drop out of the picture.

Back when we lived down there you had pride in what you were doing because everybody else was doing about the same thing, especially people that was in the same poverty level that we were in. Maybe you'd have a cow, or a bull, or a boar hog and you knew he'd be the best around and that was (reason for) a lot of pride. When you start giving people stuff they lose pride. Now, there's people down there that will not work because they're afraid they'll jeopardize their food-stamp program. That person lives in an old run-down place and it *is* run down, clean-wise. Back before people lived in some run-down places, like we lived in a log cabin and it wasn't the best-looking thing on the outside, but you go inside and it's clean. The clothing we wore was clean. This individual today, the kids go around little dirty fellows, they're not taken care of properly at all. There's no pride in keeping yourself looking respectable or keeping your kids clean, and I think that's sad.

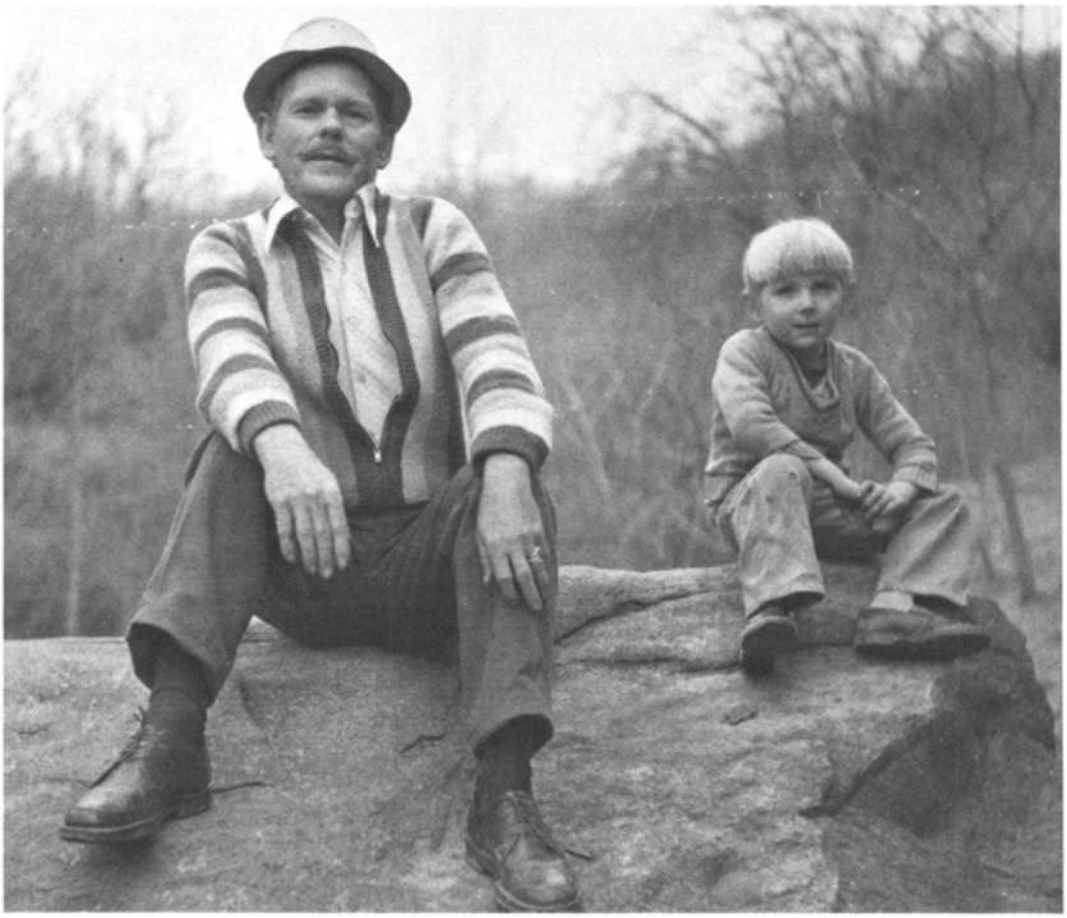
We have kids right here* that can receive a free breakfast, they can receive a free lunch. If your mom and dad cannot afford your shoes and clothing, we can buy that for them. When you set that up in the eyes of the kids, what reason does he have to go out and get a job? When the Happy Pappy program first started, to receive help they had to go out and do something for it, that's the reason he had some pride. They cleaned off the roads, they cleaned out the streams, (and) they received cash money that they could do whatever they wanted to with. Don't ask me why that program ended. It's a lot better than the program they got now where they just *give* it to you.

*At Cincinnati's Porter Junior High School.

For many mountain persons migration was never a realistic alternative to the bleak job market in Central Appalachia because they were unable to work. Some suffered physical disorders that were frequently linked to careers in the coal mines; others, including Bessie Gayheart, had dependent children and felt their place was at home. People who have never faced hunger and long-term unemployment often callously view public assistance as the easy way out, but those who depend upon welfare tell a different story. They say it is not easy; that while it does indeed put food on the table that not-so-subtle ways of welfare soon lead to embarrassment and loss of dignity.

In the United States there are many different forms of public assistance programs ranging from the socially acceptable federal aid to financial troubled corporations and tax write-offs for mortgage payers, to the much maligned Aid to Families with Dependent Children. It is the latter that Marvin Gullett and Bessie Gayheart address themselves to.

Marvin Gullett, who discussed coal towns and racial tensions in Chapters 5 and 7, planned on having either a farming or mining career but those hopes were dashed by an illness that eventually led to a life on welfare.



Marvin Gullet

The young generation can't imagine what a hard time people had through the thirties. It happened to hit me right at the time I needed to go on to (the sixth grade). I'd come home and I'd start clearing up land, help Dad farm and put stuff in. Dad didn't want to be on the relief rolls (so) he got a job in the mines. He had to work all the time and he got such little wages, eleven cents a ton; everything depended on me. I was the oldest boy and the others was too lazy or not big enough to work. I worked on WPA when I was thirteen years old, pick and shovel. I had to do that or else starve. That was too much to put on me at an early age.

Finally (in 1940), a year before I married, I did have a nervous breakdown. Come to find out I had heart trouble and I had bad nerves, too. Up to that time, though, I worked at several jobs. I (did) a lot of hard work, carried loads on my back that would kill a horse at one time. Of course, that strained my heart and made it worse. During the war they weren't particular about letting disabled men work. I worked at Blue Diamond mine a little while and (then) I went out to Michigan and tried farming. I sold my home and moved to Michigan because my folks had moved out there. While I was out there I had (another) nervous breakdown (in 1947). When I got back I still had my money in Hazard Bank (so) I bought a big piece of bottom land at the mouth of First Creek. I farmed it but I couldn't make a living. It's not that I wouldn't work—I never was afraid of work in my life—(but) I had this nervous breakdown on account of living through the Depression days. (Also), I'd hurt my back in (a rock) fall and something happened to my spine. From then on I was always disabled. (In) 1948 the company doctor told me, "Your heart is the worst heart I ever examined; it stops and starts again. You will never be able to work at hard, manual labor. The only thing you can do is get this Aid for Dependent Children." It took nerve and courage to (accept) it. I didn't like to, but I had to. When you ain't got no other alternative then you want to do the best you can. What else can you do? You (can) try to rob or steal. What will happen to you? You wind up in the federal pen somewhere, which is good enough for you if you are foolish to do that. I didn't try to steal or get anything dishonest. I didn't feel there was any slur on it because that's what it was for. See, I wasn't a feller trying to cheat, or somebody (wanting) to get something for nothing.

The most I ever had was $185 a month, (which was) when I had nine children at home so you had to be a pretty good manager to send them to school, provide enough to eat, and keep a roof over their head. Unless you (have) raised a family—and raised them right, give them what they need—you ain't got no idea what it takes to raise eight or nine kids. It (was) pretty hard at times. We didn't suffer for food because I got food in regardless of whether I got anything else, but there is other expenses. You have to go in debt for new furniture (or a) washing machine. (Social workers) used to think it was awful if you bought a television, (even) if it was an old used one. If you done that your check was stopped. If you went out and bought a head of stock that might supplement your check through the winter, they were against that; that would get you cut off. They got it fixed in a way that you couldn't help yourself hardly. You had to spend that check each month and (were) not allowed to lay up any of it. (They) encouraged some people not to have anything instead of telling them to (plan) ahead and put in a good garden plot.

I always have been independent and I never did beg to them. I'd demand they give me what I know is due me by law. I'd (state) my case and (when) they cut me out I appealed it to the state board in Frankfort and they ruled I (should) get it back. I got a letter here from A. B. Happy Chandler. When he learned (in 1957) about what they was doing, he gave me a quick hearing and I got back on. I had to go through a lot of hardship while I was waiting and that made it hard on the kids. After I was put back on they had to treat me a little better. I'd go up there and they'd call me in quicker. Here lately they began showing that they can just treat me any way (because) I'm getting old and my kids (are) getting out of school and getting married off, but I have to live just the same as if I didn't have any kids.

Sometimes you don't get waited on one day and have to go back another day; that costs me money. They'd say, "Come back next week," and I'd have to pay double fare. They didn't care, you are just another number to them. They act pretty independent; bureaucrats are always that way. Somebody that has got a little office job (has) to use their authority to make you feel little, make you feel bad. They try to act like it comes out of their own pockets (when) they are hired to hand it out.

There have been some abuses (with food stamps), I admit that. Some people take the food stamps and trade it to money and get whiskey. The merchants is crooked enough (so) somebody (can) get the money back on the food stamps. Of course, all we ever got with it was food. There is a lot of people that might cheat, but I'll tell you one thing: 80 percent of them spends the money honest and gets what they need with it. Some stores don't want to let you have credit if you trade with stamps, seems like they are a little more independent with (food-stamp customers). They'd rather have the greenback than just a piece of paper. I believe (some) feel like you are beholden to them and you got to toe the line. Most of the time (though, merchants) are glad to get the stamps because it is the same as money.

I (have often) fumed at the bureaucracy which was set up to help (the poor) in this country. To think that they'd try to make out like you was a vagrant with a hand stuck out (when there was) a law passed by Congress to help the poor people, I can't understand it. The same idea has been propagandized to set these wealthy people against the poverty people. A large segment of the American people has got the wrong impression about (welfare). They think that it is all just a cheat, a fraud. Ninety percent of (the welfare) people are due it.

In time the whole American people (will) have to go on relief if the recession don't end. Then these people that is so proud, what are they going to say when they have to take it? The way the world continues you could be begging some day. If you come to that you will be glad to take whatever somebody gives you and you (will) say, "I've got no other alternative." I guarantee if you live long enough you will have to do that.

Bessie Gayheart was born on Kelly Fork near Cordia, Kentucky, and today lives close to her homeplace. She is an active volunteer with the Citizens for Social and

Economic Justice, a group organized to relate to issues facing low-income mountain residents. The group's most recent accomplishment in which Bessie participated was starting a food cooperative near Hindman, Kentucky.

Bessie Gayheart

I'm Bessie Fields Smith Gayheart. I was born in 1931 and I went to the eighth grade. Education was pretty hard to get in those days, so I never did make it to college or high school. I guess I got more education in my older days than I got in school from finding out what complications there is in life and what people have to go through to survive.

When I first went on welfare I would have been more than glad to have gone out and gotten a job. I could (have gone) to Hazard and got a job for a dollar and a quarter a hour, eight hours a day, but by the time I bought gas I wouldn't have had enough to (buy) a loaf of bread. My first thought (when I had to go on welfare) was that it was something I didn't want to accept. It was a thought that almost put me in tears. We have lived in Indiana and I had worked very hard. I was used to feeling free to go out and spend what I had earned for the things my family needed; I felt good with life and what we was doing. When I got my first welfare check I felt embarrassed. I didn't have the courage to go out and cash a check like I would my own pay check. I could go out and sign my pay check, smile while I was doing it. When I got my first welfare check, I felt embarrassed, but I had to depend on it.

When I first got food stamps I felt embarrassed about going into a store and having to watch what you was laying on the counter. You would have to have two

piles, one for the food and (one for) the soap powders and detergents that you paid cash for. This is embarrassing. Our kids can't dress like the other children and they (have) not been able to compete with buying books, which is not give to you. They're ignored in their sitting quarters. They're not dealt with ordinary students (because) they're a "welfare recipient."

I had quite a few problems when we first signed up on welfare. My husband become sick and he went into the hospital. He had a drinking problem, so I guess they considered this not being very sick (because) it took quite a lot of time to get (necessary) medical evidence which is very hard to come by if you don't have money to pay doctors' bills and to pay for the reports. You just don't go out and pick them up by saying that you need them.

There is just so many inconveniences that discourage you. If they send you a paper and you fill it out (you have) to walk to the post office or drive. If you don't have a car you've got to hire someone to take you. If you've got a car, it's a problem because you don't have the money to buy the gas. I have had appointments to be there (at) nine-thirty, and it would be three-thirty before I'd get out. Maybe one worker would (see) one (person) in forty-five minutes or an hour and the rest of them (were) at coffee breaks. (They make) you feel that (you're) not worth anything, that the world would be better off without you.

Most of the workers in Knott County is pretty nice, but there is some of them that acts just exactly like that check that you're going to get is going to be pulled right out of their own pocket and give to you. I have had them to ask me some pretty personal questions: "What do you spend your money for?" "Do you drink, Bessie?" If they ask me something like that now I tell them that it's none of their business.

When me and my husband got divorced they asked was my ex-husband living in the house? It would go right down to the point of almost asking if you slept with your ex-husband last night. They had me pressured one time to the point where I was just about ready to give up on everything, but I began to realize that my kids had to live and since I couldn't get a job and support them I had (to endure it).

When I was divorced there was lots of women just like me that was afraid to remarry because of the position that it would put their family in. You're never sure that a man can get a job here. You're never sure that he can come up with enough to feed a family. I was afraid to marry, afraid of what might happen to the children. (Eventually) I was married, was cut off, and then I called a lawyer and talked to him. My sister had remarried just a little bit after I did and I told him about her. We filed a joint suit against the welfare department in Pikeville. It was about three or four months (before) I got a letter telling me that I had won the suit and I should go back to the welfare department.

I have had lots of experiences that has taught me to stand up and say what I feel. (I saw) that our coal industry rules our political people. Our political people rule our welfare department. Our school boards rule our schools, and they're political people tied in with the coal companies. I believe (our) political system is rottener than hell. When a candidate runs for something he is running for a servant of the people, but how many people do they serve when they get in there? They serve the

industry, money, power, and theirselves. I can't say I have any feelings for them whatsoever, because if I had the opportunity, I'd put my foot in their face and I'd shove it.

I kept my mouth shut for long enough that it began to bother me and I finally decided that I would take part in some of these meetings that people were attending about strip mining. They were all talking about what (strip mining) had done to them and it seemed like the people was lingering on the thing that had happened to them. I said, "We have all talked about what has happened to us, but I have never heard anyone talk about what we're going to do about it." I asked them if they would (be) willing to come out with me tomorrow and stop overweight coal trucks. The roads were tore up, especially Old Fifteen down toward Homeplace Hospital, and it was a concern to me if a person had a heart attack that they might not have gotten them to the hospital in time.

We went out and we stopped coal trucks the next day. I stuck with this thing of fighting strip mining for quite some time. I was on welfare and I would get notices that I'd have to come in and re-sign up more often than other people was doing. At first I didn't pay too much attention to it, I would just obey the notice. (When) we went to really putting the pressure on the strip-mining operations I got a notice in the mail that a field worker was going to be at my house the next day. He talked to me for quite a while:

"Mrs. Smith, don't you believe that you're spending too much time away from home, that you're neglecting your children?"

"No, I don't."

"Really now, if you didn't attend so many of those meetings, don't you believe that your kids would be happier?"

"I'm not sure they would. I do the best for them that I can. I feed them, I clean them, I send them to school and I give them as much as a person on welfare can give a child. I never leave them alone. I think you have sat behind that desk too long and don't know what's going on around you; otherwise you would be doing the same thing I'm doing: looking out for the future of your children (rather) than just the dollar that you're making to take home to them."

About a week (later) I got a notice from the welfare department that I was discontinued from welfare, that I hadn't filled out the forms which had been sent to me. In fact, I had received two sets of forms in less than eight weeks—you're only (supposed) to receive one every six months—and I had filled both of them out and mailed them in. That was pretty close to check time (and) when I said I would call a lawyer they let me speak to the supervisor and I said, "It's not my fault that I didn't get my check." Eventually I got the check.

I don't think I would ever opened my mouth on any issue if it hasn't been for having to go on welfare. I've seen good people broke down into nothings; people that have worked hard all their lives becoming alcoholics because they had to beg somebody for help. The begging comes when we have government policies handed out in little doses, just enough to wet their tongue, not enough to quench their thirst. We need a welfare system that will keep our people well enough to let them enjoy life instead of punish life and live it lonely. Give them an opportunity, don't

break their spirit and their pride, and you'd have a working nation. If you've got a good man turn him loose, don't bring him down to the lowest standing and put him on his knees begging to people. When you start begging you start hurting. Then you become nobody, then you become walked on.

All the monies that are going into our welfare system today should be handled something like this: there should be work for the men that is able, there should be assistance for men that's not able, assistance for children that can't help themselves. This assistance should be in the form of what it is now but with different attitudes. Our federal programs (that have men) move brush off the road or sweep the courthouse is not helping the situation of the people at all. This is robbing the people of a thing that is most precious to them and that's pride. If you strip people of pride you might as well shoot them because they ain't worth a damn. The programs are good for one thing: to keep you (alive) from day to day, but not building a thing for the future.

They want to keep us where they can control us and say,"We have done this for you, what are you going to do for us?" They ask me what they've done for me, I'll tell them they ain't done a damn thing for me. What I've had done for me I've done myself and I feel that way even though I draw welfare. I wouldn't be drawing it if I hadn't fought for it.

Riddle

If a poker, a shovel, and a pair of tongs comes to $47.75, what would a ton of coal come to this year?

Ashes, son. Nothin but ashes.