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# Compromising Hunger

Ken Briggs | Feb. 7, 2014 NCR Today

Level headed church people have signed on to the Congressional Farm Bill and I'm sorely pressed to applaud politely. I'd been among those who has championed compromise in the face of a polarized House and Senate. "Let us come and reason together" and all that.

But now I balk because of that $8 billion cut in food stamps deemed necessary to win the "good stuff" like ending direct payments to farmers to do nothing. To me, it's not an equivalency: food stamps are a matter of core humanity while payments are a by-product of messy strategy.

Yet the threats to empty stomachs do not stir mass protests and a compliant public tacitly agrees with those who justify food shortages on Bible passages said to claim that the indolent, as defined by themselves, deserve to starve. This in the shadow of the anniversary of the War Against Poverty's achievements. Where are the Million Person Marches when you need them?

For all the public hand wringing about inequality by religious leaders among others, the stark needs of poor people are once again lost in the maneuvering of Big Politics. Sad to say, the president is among those willing to swallow this statistically small sacrifice (only 1% after all, no big deal for most of us, right?), for the sake of larger accomplishments. Those who crave compromise or wish to punish "freeloaders" will have their way at the expense of those whose powerlessness makes their needs easy to ignore.

PS -- Though Republicans scavenge the Bible for scraps of evidence to justify withholding food stamps, the overwhelming lesson from Scripture, supremely not only in Matthew 25, makes feeding the poor imperative.

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