

Stretch

I'll take my share, without
knowing
that

I do, that I
need
to do it.

 Only
once I am your child, could you
believe me

when I say,
 "I'm hungry."

—Stan Burriss

Coffee

Cursing Blind Lloyd for raising the price
of weak coffee

At his bleak morning diner on Sixth Avenue

"Damn Lloyd, I'll brew my own when I
get to work."

The pregnant secretary startling me at six.

So I spill the coffee pot

The hot brown flow burned my feet

Nothing to wash down the gummy prozac

The secretary sold her bowling ball womb

And Lloyd sold both his cloudy goat-eyes

In league with Satan to ruin me

Emanation crouches on the sixth floor.

Hiding to the left of my office door

—Nancy Dunlap

Together, For All Of Us

Brothers and Sisters,
Don't tell us we'll get a job if we just work harder,
"Work 8 hours a day for two months and find a job!"

Don't help us jump from windows,
Or break each other's hearts with our bitterness,
Or reach for the mylanta to cover our sleepless nights.
How many of us become alcoholics looking for work
8 hours a day?

Some of us went from production with hundreds of
fellow workers to working by ourselves as janitors,
just to get off that unemployment 8 hours a day.
Do you know what happens to us? Do you remember?

We've washed the car but we're not going anywhere.
We've lost our winter coat because
we couldn't pay the cleaner's bill.

Our shoes are rundown and we can't replace the
medically-required support stockings.
We don't have any medical coverage
and we've boiled the chicken bones for the last time.
Our rent is 60% of our unemployment check
and sometimes it's a problem just
to have soap to wash clothes.

We get our reading and recreation
from the library.

We go work in our 'pea patch'
just so we can bring *something* home.
We're trying to hold our families together,
to not cut each other up with our anger.

So don't cut us off
by telling us to work harder,
to find a job.
Don't put that on us.

Help us protect each other,
Join us for justice,
Together, for all of us.

We need your feet, Sister
when we march.
We need your voice, Brother
when we shout.

We need your fist, neighbors,
when we demand
NO CUTS! JOBS! AFFIRMATIVE GUARANTEES!

—Lonnie Nelson