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**"Freedom of the Press belongs to those who own one."**

*A. J. Liebling of the New Yorker*

January 8, 2002



# Commentary

## Homeless Revisited...

**T**he absolute worst pummeling I ever took as a columnist for the Bernardo News in the 12 years I wrote for that august and award-winning newspaper was for a column I wrote in which I proposed that churches house the homeless.

*I touched a real nerve! Churches literally called the editor and threatened to pull their advertising, the Letters to the Editor were scathing, and the minister of the largest church in RB took me to lunch because he wanted to meet whoever would make such an outrageous suggestion. He assured me at that lunch that his congregation donated money to homeless shelters, so that should absolve his flock of personally helping the homeless.*

*I had done a little research and determined that in the major cities of America there was a consistent ratio of homeless to churches of about seven to one. I opined that since Jesus had directed his flock to take care of the poor that churches were the obvious answer: They are seldom occupied for more than a few hours a week, they are heated and lighted, many have kitchen and bathroom facilities for huge crowds, and, perhaps more importantly, they have congregations that include drug and alcohol counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists, and employers of all sorts. Obviously, some churches are not*

*physically capable of housing any homeless people, but large churches can easily accommodate many more than seven. Considering the average of seven homeless per church, I felt that was not asking too much.*

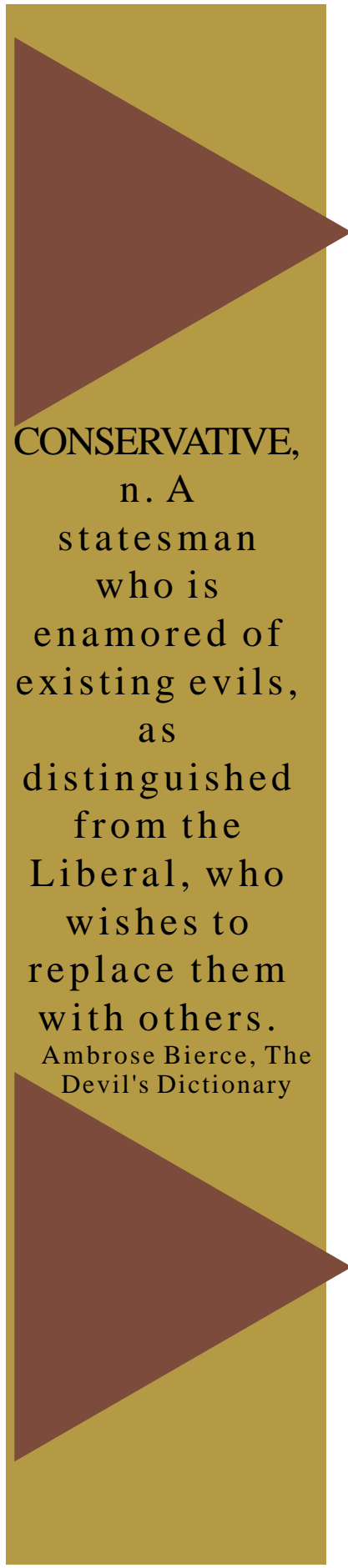
*More importantly, I wrote it would solve the national homeless problem by 8 A.M. tomorrow morning.*

*One of my good friends wrote a letter to the editor complaining that I simply did not understand – the homeless had lice, she wrote, and then there was the insurance problem for churches. Being basically hard-nosed I wrote a second column in which I said that Jesus had ministered to lepers, so I didn't think lice to be much of a problem for His flock, and that I did not know that Jesus had said take care of the poor unless you had insurance challenges.*

*I mention this distasteful experience because of the recent North County Times front-page story about local churches becoming directly involved with the homeless. Even more importantly, the O'Reilly Factor aired a discussion with a New York pastor whose church was offering actual shelter to the homeless. It seems that the subject has become a political issue in New York, with large churches in wealthy neighborhoods facing angry neighbors and members of the congregation over the obvious problems inherent with housing even a few homeless...exposing their families to bad language, public urination and defecation.*

*Sounds a lot like the problems of living on a golf course! I have seen that same behavior on the sixth green adjacent to my home!*

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