

Unemployment

by Jerry Ratch

The line of the unemployed
wrapped back on itself
like an accordion pleat
and extended all the way across
a great hall
You could see the faces
of them, bluish and drawn
under the dim florescent
lighting

First in line were laid-off
bees
weeping with their wings
hanging down
dragging on the ground

Next came the bankers
on their knees
beaten and bruised
after being pummeled
by a crowd at the door

And scattered all around them
were little yellow and rust-colored
piles of iron will
along with shredded bundles
of abandoned nerves of steel

You only looked forward
No one could afford to look back
anymore, and you saw what
lay ahead

On either side of the line
were two tables
and you were given one
of three choices

Some walked straight into
the unending labyrinth of the
government. Or you turned
to the table on the right
into the waiting arms of the Army

Or you could drift to the left
into the Church
and we knew instantly
what that meant

But then I woke up
with a start
and realized it had all
been a bad dream
Only a dream

And happily stepped out the door
into the street
where I waited at the curb
for the flow of blood
to let up

