

# 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

