

PUBLIC SERVICE

By Ralph Tropf

CONTACT:

Ralph Tropf
4545 Los Feliz Blvd. #308
Los Angeles, CA 90027

(323) 667-2584

rtropf@earthlink.net

CHARACTERS:

Counselor (male or female, any age)

Woman (female, mature)

SCENE:

A desk with a telephone.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Lights rise on the COUNSELOR, talking on the telephone

COUNSELOR

These people come to me... They have no where else to go... Then we'll have to insist on a bigger budget... Mr. Stern, I like my job... What else am I going to do, sell used cars?

The WOMAN enters and takes a seat across from the Counselor

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

I understand... I see... I will try my best. Thank you.

The Counselor hangs up and speaks to the Woman

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm not taking appointments today.

WOMAN

I don't have an appointment.

COUNSELOR

Then you'll have to call and make one.

WOMAN

"1-800-FOR-HELP." I've tried. It doesn't help.

COUNSELOR

The selection is clearly...

WOMAN

"Press one for human services, press two for public assistance, press three for the welfare office..."

COUNSELOR

The recorded messages are for your convenience.

WOMAN

No, they are for YOUR convenience. It makes my life more difficult.

COUNSELOR

Ma'am, I have a thousand cases to handle. Subpoenas, police reports requiring investigation...

WOMAN

You are a public servant. You are here to serve the public. I am here. Serve me.

COUNSELOR

What do you want?

WOMAN

My children are driving me crazy.

COUNSELOR

Where is your husband?

WOMAN

Who knows?

The Counselor looks through some files.

COUNSELOR

That would be "Aid to Single Mothers," form L-205. How many children?

WOMAN

So many I don't know what to do.

COUNSELOR

We'll need their names, genders, birth dates and locations of birth, social security numbers, if any. I assume you brought two forms of identification with you.

WOMAN

What kind of identification?

COUNSELOR

A driver's license will do.

WOMAN

I don't drive.

COUNSELOR

A passport, then.

WOMAN

Who can afford to leave the country?

COUNSELOR

Resident identification card?

WOMAN

I tried to get one. They said I needed a driver license or a passport to prove I was who I said I was.

COUNSELOR

A birth certificate?

WOMAN

I don't know. It was so long ago.

COUNSELOR

You'll also need to prove a birth certificate for each of your children.

WOMAN

Where am I going to find twenty-three birth certificates?

COUNSELOR

How many?

WOMAN

Twelve boys and eleven girls, at last count.

COUNSELOR

Are they all yours?

WOMAN

Four are mine, with my husband. Another one is mine with my boyfriend...

COUNSELOR

(writing) That's four in marriage, one illegitimate.

WOMAN

Five are from my ex-husband from his two previous marriages. Three belong to my sister, who left them here a year ago.

COUNSELOR

She'll have to file her own L-205.

WOMAN

She's in Vegas.

COUNSELOR

When she gets back, tell her to call our automated phone system.