

By Harriett Muhammad

Dear Harriett: About a year ago, my husband started drinking heavily and staying out late with his friends. This continued quite a while and he would offer no form of explanation when I would ask him about his actions. Then one day, he just left me and our three children—knowing that I had no money or food in the house.

THIS MADE me very bitter because it seemed to me that he just quit caring for us altogether. I would rack my brain trying to find out just what was wrong at home.

I tried to be a good wife and I kept the children and the house clean and fixed him good meals. We had no marital troubles that I was aware of—except he didn't seem able to communicate with me or express his feelings.

Well, I was forced to accept state aid for myself and the children—and shortly after, he did start giving us support money. I refused to let him come around at first because I was bitter and also I didn't want to let him visit the children as long as he stayed drunk so much.

THEN I WAS told that I had to let him visit the children as long as he was contributing to their support. He would come once in awhile, but never let me know where he was staying.

Now, in the last two months, he has told me how much he misses having his family. He seems to love the children and they love him. For their sake, I want him to come home, but now we have an added problem—he has no job.

I'm afraid if he returns, we will lose the little money that we have been getting—and a bad situation would be worse. What can we do to keep our family together?—Mrs. H. W., San Francisco, Calif.

DEAR MRS. H. W.: The next time your husband comes over to visit, ask to speak with him seriously about his returning home. There is a way to get him back in your home again if he is willing.

It used to be that a mother was only eligible for financial assistance from her county if she had been deserted by her husband. This has led to the breaking up of many a family where the man just wasn't able to take care of his family and felt he had to leave or pretend that he no longer lived there in order to be eligible for assistance.

Now, since the 1962 amendments to the Social Security laws assistance now is given to families of unemployed parents.

The only requirement is that your husband (or any man in a similar situation) continue to look for employment or enroll in a training program and accept any reasonable employment that may present itself—even though it isn't in his usual line of work. Even if he were to accept part-time employment that wasn't enough support, he would receive partial aid until he did find a full time job.

IF YOUR husband has decided to straighten himself up and once more value his family, it most certainly is worth while to discuss this with him and see what he thinks. You need each other.

This aid is only a "tide-over" until times get better—and they will as long as you take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself.

Something on your mind? Write and tell me about it.