

VOP Seattle
Notes From the SVDP Western Region
Seattle, Washington - June 21-25, 2000

Don Lamb and Steve Pehanich
Western Region Representatives, VOP National Committee



Two Voice of the Poor sessions were conducted during the Seattle Western Region gathering by Don Lamb (Trustee) and Steve Pehanich (Representative). They defined the Voice of the Poor Committee and described how Vincentians can get involved. It was emphasized that the Society is grassroots and it is important for Vincentians to take an active role in helping to determine what the Society advocates for. At the national level only the National President speaks on behalf of the National Council and the Society. Regionally the Council President is the voice for the local Vincentians because he/she is their elected representative. It was also emphasized that as a grassroots organization it is important to form local VOP Committees to work for change. Locally there are issues (eg. homeless shelter, food for the poor, etc.) that affect Vincentians and those they serve. Many of these important micro-issues may never reach the National level but they have a definite and ongoing impact on the poor. The sessions provided an opportunity to think beyond the traditional service provided to our neighbors in need by seeking ways to advocate for change. It was emphasized that the Society must be careful whom we advocate with and what is advocated for. It was recommended that if working with another organization, the activities be based on an issue-by-issue basis. There was also discussion regarding the avoidance of campaign involvement by the Society. This is something Vincentians can do as individuals but the Society is prohibited from doing as a non-profit 501c3 organization. Handouts were provided including working drafts of the VOP job description, structure, and just wage paper for Vincentian input.