

Then in 1962, public welfare took a great stride forward when Congress enacted the public welfare amendments which provided assistance to the needy children of unemployed parents, permitted the development of community work and training programs for employable relief recipients, offered incentives for recipients to seek and hold employment, provided day care for the children of employed mothers and instituted a program of social services designed to prevent and eliminate dependency.

Reluctantly, perhaps, we have to concede that while these forward steps in public welfare were impelled by our desire to help recipients toward self-help and self-care, they were also propelled by extensive, often completely unwarranted public criticism of the program—particularly, aid to the families of needy children. But we do have the outlines of a program of prevention although time is required for the States to understand, accept, and implement the constructive provisions of the amendments while today and for some time to come these public welfare agencies have and will have problems of acute shortages of persons well qualified to provide these services.

THE PROBABLE IMPACT OF THIS ACT ON PUBLIC WELFARE

It is our judgment that the Economic Opportunity Act provides a new and imaginative concept that will stimulate public imagination and support and can supply a dynamism that will accelerate State action on the public welfare amendments and challenge young people to seek employment in the welfare field. Poverty becomes truly not an issue to be endlessly debated as to its causes—social or individual—but a condition that is at least partially remediable.

Roscoe Drummond, in a recent analysis of the war on poverty, describes the poverty program of President Johnson as “headed in the right direction.” He notes that poverty is not due to the failure of our economic system per se, but rather “to the failure of our society to provide the education, the job training, and retraining and encouragement and the environment needed to help the poor become productive and the productive more prosperous.”

The inclusion of title V, “Family Unity Through Jobs” is, we believe, an illustration of the point of the stimulatory effect of this legislation, for we understand that some opponents of the act nevertheless do support this particular title. In the perspective and philosophy of this legislation—this program is not work for relief—too often an employable individual on assistance is given work relief to quiet criticism of the so-called dole—but a program providing tools and supervisory skills so that employability is maintained and even enhanced. In the context of this legislation, work relief becomes transmuted to economic opportunity; a dignity is added to earning an assistance payment that is a significant strike forward in an individual’s feeling of self-worth, a basic ingredient in the psychology of employability.

We do want to underscore, however, that families on aid to families with dependent children represent the poorest of the poor with the national average yearly family income well below \$2,000. As part of the history of this legislation, we stress the importance of State action to increase payments for AFDC and, with respect to AFDC youth