families headed by a man who works full-time but at low wages. In most cases, these are large families. In 1965, for example, 17 percent of the households headed by a man who worked 50 weeks or more and who had four or more children were poor as compared with 4 percent of fully employed male family heads with three or fewer children. When one counts children rather than families, the seriousness of the problem becomes evident. In spite of improvements in the last few years, there were 14.3 million children living in poverty in 1965, nearly half in a family with five or more children, about a third in families headed by a woman, but also nearly a third in families headed by a man who worked full time all year.

Just above the poverty line is a group with incomes that are still lower than what one would like to think of as an American standard of living. This near-poor group included 14.6 million persons in 1965, so that the total living below a low-income level was 47.3 million.

These counts of poverty and low income are based on the sample Current Population Survey. As such they exclude persons in institutions, many of whom are among the poorest. They also measure poverty on the basis of the total income of all related persons living together. Thus, for example, a widow who lives with her son or daughter because she does not have sufficient income to live alone will nevertheless not be counted as poor unless the total group is poor. Similarly some mother-child families who share quarters with relatives do not appear in the count of those living in poverty even thought they could not get along on their own. The number of such "hidden poor" is significant, particularly among the aged. Because people in our society value highly the opportunity for independent living, it is useful to measure poverty or low income also on the basis of the income of the immediate family—an individual, a couple, or a couple and their children. Taking cognizance of the number of such persons whose own resources are insufficient but who escape poverty by living with relatives whose combining income is adequate for all would raise the poverty roster by another 2.8 million persons, of whom 1.7 million are at least 65 years old.

DRAWING THE POVERTY LINE

Poverty has many facets, not all reducible to money. Even in such terms alone, it will not be possible to obtain unanimous consent to a list of goods and services that make up the *sine qua non* and the dollars it takes to buy them. The difficulty is compounded in a country such as ours, which has long since passed the stage of struggle for sheer survival.

In many parts of the world, the overriding concern for a majority of the populace every day is still "Can I live?" For the United States as a society, it is no longer whether but how. Although by the levels of living prevailing elsewhere, some of the poor in this country might be well-to-do, no one here today would settle for mere subsistence as the just due for himself or his neighbor, and even the poorest may claim more than bread. Yet as yesterday's luxuries become tomorrow's necessities, who can define for today how much is enough? And in a society that equates economic well-being with earnings, what is the floor for those whose earning capacity is limited or absent altogether, as it is for aged persons and children?

In one sense, the difficulty of defining poverty is the price of our success story, the symbol of a society in which life has long since ceased to be a struggle just to stay alive. It signalizes the conviction that for each of us, as for all of us, this can now be so. It also means that few will be satisfied with only a minimum when so many others have so much.

It is perhaps more difficult to set a standard for poverty as a public issue than for other purposes, because in the final analysis such a procedure implies how much of our public funds and energies we wish to commit. There is not and there cannot be a uniform standard by which it can be stated unequivocally who is poor and who is not. Moreover, the means by which one may arrive at a rigorous determination of need for a specific family in a particular situation are not available for assessing economic well-being in the aggregate. Almost inevitably, lacking a case-by-case approach, a criterion applied across the board will fail to identify as poor some who are, or count as poor others who, all things considered, are, in fact, not needy. But if it is not possible to say without reservation how much is enough, it ought to be possible to say how much, on an average, is almost surely too little. Even more important than the level at which we peg the concept of too little—particularly if the findings are to relate to public action—is the proviso that the measure used depict at least roughly an equiva-