poverty declined. In 1959 some 38.9 million individuals—or 22.1 percent of the total population lived in households falling below the poverty levels of income developed by the Social Security Administration; by 1965 the number had declined to 32.7 million individuals—or 17.1 percent of the population. The sharpest declines have been among families with a male nonaged head of household, and the declines have been greater for whites than nonwhites. Increasingly, the poverty roster is becoming the hard-core groups: Aged persons, families headed by a woman and the disabled. Thus, we cannot rely on economic growth alone to pull households out of poverty as heavily in the future as in the past. This is a major reason why we must continue to improve our social security and other income maintenance programs—particularly for those not in the labor force.

Some of the worst pockets of poverty are in those parts of the central cities where living costs are highest and where resources for aiding the poor are inadequate. As compared with surrounding suburbs, central cities of our metropolitan areas have disproportionate numbers of the aged poor and of children in poor families. For example, within the central cities, 17 percent of the total population is poor, by the standards I previously stated.

Twenty-seven percent of the aged are living in poverty and 66 percent of the individuals in nonwhite families headed by a woman are living in poverty. In metropolitan areas, there are 10 million poor persons in the central cities while 6 million poor live in the surrounding suburbs. It is more likely that the head of a family living in the city will be out of the labor force than the head of the family in the suburbs. If he is working the chances are greater that he will have a low-skilled, low-paid job.

The increasing demand for health, education, and welfare services for the groups who remain in poverty in the city is growing, particularly as our awareness of their special needs grows—but the resources for meeting these demands are not growing at a fast enough pace.

Income Maintenance

A reasonable level of living for all Americans is the ultimate objective of our income maintenance programs. Putting a floor under income through income support programs so that no one falls below a minimum of need, is an intermediate step in achieving this objective. Although the objective of social security is not solely the reduction of poverty it is a major instrument in reducing the extent of poverty in this country. Public assistance programs are directed to the poor and have provided a basic income for several millions of persons. Without these programs many more persons would be in poverty and the disparity in income much greater. It is estimated that—

Without social security payments a much larger fraction of the aged would be poor. We estimate that about 37 percent of the aged beneficiaries under social security have been brought out of poverty as a result of the social security benefits that were added to whatever other income they might have had.

Of the $3.5 billion of public assistance payments to noninstitutional recipients in 1965, virtually all went to the poor.