

as Assistant Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. In any event, let me say for the record that the views which I shall present are my own and not necessarily those of the Urban Coalition.

I want to commend you for holding these well-planned public hearings on welfare and income maintenance. This is a subject which is much discussed today but very little understood. There are an awful lot of myths and misinformation about existing welfare programs, and about the poor, which can only get in the way of serious efforts to examine the contribution which income maintenance programs can make to solve the problem of poverty. There needs to be informed and wide public debate. This is the only way in which significant changes in social policy requiring commitment of substantial resources are likely to be made and sustained.

For this reason I think it is unfortunate that so much of the discussions affecting policy in this area have been carried on behind closed doors between a relatively small number of Members of Congress and representatives of the executive branch. It does not matter whether the results of these discussions are sometimes beneficial, as in the case of the medicaid program, or retrogressive, as in the case of the 1967 public assistance "freeze" and compulsory work program. Whatever may be the case with relatively small, incremental changes, where major policy or program changes are made without full debate they are not likely to find broad acceptance, and I say this without regard to which side one comes down on in the particular issue.

I for one regret the restrictions that have now been imposed on the original medicaid program, and at the same time feel strongly that the "freeze" in the aid to families with dependent children and the compulsory work amendments must be repealed before discussions of improvements in the program can be taken seriously. But I believe that in both cases there should have been full and open debate before such far-reaching amendments were enacted.

Before turning to my views as to what should be done it may be helpful to outline briefly the context of our consideration.

There are four major federally supported public assistance programs generally grouped together as welfare aiding approximately 7½ million persons. There are another 600,000 persons supported by local general assistance and relief programs. Of the Federal recipients, approximately 3 million are recipients under the three adult programs—aid to the blind, aid to the permanently and totally disabled, and old age assistance.

The rest—almost 5 million persons, of whom somewhat over 1 million are adult—receive aid to families with dependent children, or AFDC.

Trends in adult Federal assistance programs show a decline in recipient rates, with one exception. The declines in adult categories are largely attributable to the development of other sources of support and protection, specifically a broadening of social security benefits. The slight rise in aid to the disabled is generally attributed to the case-finding effects of medicaid. The number of AFDC recipients, however, has risen sharply. The increase in fiscal year 1967 over 1966 was 319,000, and, for fiscal year 1968, it is stated that in this fiscal year, it will rise over 400,000.