

providing a decent level of financial support and effective encouragement of those who are able to return to self support;

That the welfare caseload is composed largely of persons who do not work because they cannot, not because they will not. The reasons for an inability to work are for the most part not remediable—old age, total blindness or disability, or extreme youth. The reasons that may have some remedy—broken homes, poor emotional and physical health, lack of child care facilities, inadequate education and training—are not wholly within the welfare system's jurisdiction or capacity to devise remedial programs;

That the population now receiving public assistance is but a fraction of the population in need: 8 million Americans receive welfare aid but 29.7 million are defined as poor, according to the most recent Commerce Department report on national poverty;

That the welfare problem is national, rather than local, in scope and origin and therefore requires approaches that are national in scope and origin—national minimum standards of eligibility and financial assistance, emanating from a Federal financial and administrative structure;

That the present program actively encourages the breakup of families through the categorical approach that offers federal aid only to a fatherless home;

That the conditions of aid discourage the seeking and holding of employment at low wage levels that barely exceed the welfare standard in some states;

That the atmosphere of dependency that permeates a welfare home as the result of constant pressure to demonstrate individual need, is destructive to the healthy development of children. If the comment of one child who says he looks forward to "being on the welfare when I grow up" were not eloquent enough testimony of distorted values, the joy and relief of another whose mother has just gotten a job should convince us beyond a doubt of the debilitating consequences of dependency. Even without desperately needed research into the facts of inter-generational dependency, the case examples we do have are impressive; and

That the welfare program operates in almost complete isolation from other programs of rehabilitation, community development and the other public services. Welfare recipients have even been avoided by the anti-poverty program in its anxiety to show results, since the welfare client is admittedly the hardest to inspire to self help.

Areas of divergence

After decades of silence with regard to the welfare program—and I hold myself and my profession as responsible for that silence as anyone—public discussion and a spate of suggestions for change now come from every side.

Unfortunately, the proponent of each remedy tends to espouse it as a panacea, and conflict threatens to intensify. In our eagerness to find "the" solution, we continue to conduct studies, propose experiments, hold forums and delay action.

Obviously, what has become crystalized as "the welfare problem" cannot be remedied by a new income maintenance system alone. I think we already know what can be done in that area—and I will outline some of the specifics in a moment. We also know the direction in which the present system must move in order to develop into something quite new. And despite the sometimes passionate espousal of other programs instead of a new income maintenance system, I think we also know that new forms of subsidized employment, massively increased child care arrangements, more flexible public education, much wider networks of training programs, are also necessary in addition to—and must be constructed at the same time as—new income maintenance systems.

Toward improvement of the present income maintenance system

Although I do not believe that there are, as the committee asked "opportunities for achieving a fair and economic welfare system through improvements that can and must be made now in the present program, at the same time that we begin seriously to consider alternative systems."

The most profound and urgent change in the public assistance system must be the provision of a national minimum standard of assistance. I am sure the committee is well informed on the subject of assistance levels around the nation, so suffice it to say that a system that allows payments that range from a high of \$59.70 in New York (average payment per AFDC recipient) to a low of \$8.35 in Mississippi—with a national average of \$39.15—cannot possibly be justified