

We think that the system should be based on declarations and taking—essentially taking the poor person's word for what his condition is, the same as we do with other people in the income tax system and in many of the other benefit systems and subsidy systems, where a person simply fills out an affidavit as to what his condition is and would get his income maintenance based on that.

In other words, we ask for equal treatment with other kinds of taxing and subsidy systems.

The information about the system should be widely disseminated and generally available, which it is currently not under the present welfare system.

We feel also that there should be built-in arrangements for redress of grievances, a system where a person who feels they have a grievance against the system may get a fair hearing, may have a chance to be heard and have their grievance aired. There is no such system in the present welfare system. There is something called a fair hearing system which does not afford anybody any degree of fairness. The two most elementary facts about this fair hearing system should expose that, No. 1, there is no adequate information about what your rights are, so how can you possibly expect to pursue any kind of appeal; and second, and the grossest thing of all, is that your benefits are cut off and frequently you can go without benefits for months while you seek the hearing. In a system that can deny you the benefits without the due process of a hearing can simply have no justice in it.

So that welfare recipients are completely at the mercy of the system when they simply cannot get a hearing unless and until many months after the benefits have been cut off. What they have to do, obviously, is make a deal with their caseworker or make a deal with the welfare department and possibly make some kind of compromise in order to get back on. This often is done at very great hardship to the recipient.

Finally, the most sensitive issue in income maintenance from our experience with it as far as the general public is concerned, is the so-called work incentive. Now, I have found no problem with work incentive among welfare recipients. The welfare recipients in our organization—and we are in contact with some of the hardest working people in this country, many of them work 18 hours a day for no pay to try to raise their children, to keep their households together. It may come as a great source of shock and information to many people that fully 15 percent of the welfare recipients, the AFDC recipients, work at the present time for wages, wages which are quantitatively and completely turned over to the welfare department. They work for nothing, in other words, because that money is immediately taken away by the welfare department.

Now, how can you accuse people in such a system when significant numbers of them work for nothing; how can you accuse such people of not having incentive to work? It seems to me this is the most ridiculous notion that has been foisted upon people, that the issue around welfare is that people do not want to work.

Most welfare recipients, moreover, would love to get a job if they could have their children taken care of or if there were some opportunity for them to have a job that provided an adequate income for their families.