

There have been a number of studies to show that, for the most part in the communities where welfare recipients live, with the skill levels and education they have—and in most cases their reason for not having the skills and the education has denied them that opportunity to have those skills or that education—under those conditions they still have the will, the desire to work, but there is no real opportunity for them. Now, there is a problem with work incentives in an income maintenance program. The problem is this: Whereas it would cost 20 billion to bring everyone up to this low-income line, it would cost about \$11 billion if everyone—and I am not just talking about the welfare recipients, I mean if every poor person were brought up to the so-called poverty line—it would only cost this country about 11 billion. That is the current income gap. A lot of people worry that it is going to cost a lot more than that on the grounds that a lot of people are going to quit work and sit back and get this income. This is nonsense, because people want more for themselves, people want more than this minimum for themselves, they want the opportunity if only the jobs were available which pay the money to provide more for their families. Those jobs are not available and this minimum income is of vital necessity.

However, the work incentive is a very costly provision to build into an income maintenance program. It must be understood that our basic interest and what must be the basic priority of the country is giving income to the poorest people in the country so that they can raise their children with a measure of dignity and a measure of respect.

Now, I can think and the organization feels that it would be desirable to build in a modest work incentive program—if you got a job you could keep a portion of that income you got from the job. But it has to be borne in mind, and we should be very clear about this, that if you have a work incentive provision, more people become eligible for the program, simply because the level you are willing to support goes up, and you must support people for a long period of time. You are putting money in for the people who do not need it the most.

The people who need the money the most are people with no income or who are below the present Federal poverty line and below the low-income line.

I should also point out that many of the schemes, the negative income tax schemes, the ones I have read, most of them have such a big work incentive feature that they spend a large portion of the money they are going to put into income maintenance on people who do not need it as much as the people at the lower end of the spectrum. We are urging that the money that is available, the emphasis for that money be put on people at the lowest economic levels.

We have information, and as a closing note I want to say that it is very encouraging that the Joint Economic Committee is willing to look into this issue of the income maintenance and guaranteed income, family allowances, and so forth. But at the same time the Congress has just passed the most punitive, the most regressive, and the most backward piece of social legislation in the entire history of the country.

The welfare law drawn by Congressman Mills and the Ways and Means Committee has been described by many of the leading students of this as something that compares only with Elizabethan poor laws, something that has no place in the 20th Century affluent society, that